Small Group Reading Instruction: Formative Assessments

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MASTER'S DEGREE FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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Type of exit requirement: Professional Project

The supervisory committee met with the candidate for a final evaluation in which all aspects of the candidate's program were reviewed. The committee's assessment and recommendations are:

Recommendations:

- ✓ Degree should be awarded

Recommendations:

- ✓ Exit Requirement has been approved

Chapter 1: Introduction

Schools need data to show that they are effective. In my school district, data has been the topic of almost every professional development I have attended. This can be a motivating environment, as every decision is made to ensure the best student outcome and clear goals are defined (Lange et al., 2012). However, as a second-year teacher, data and high expectations of student performance can feel daunting when it feels like there are no conversations about the instructional process. Oftentimes, curriculum has a lot of components but not a lot of guidance. This leaves instructional strategies open for teachers to use their professional judgement on what students need. This is where strategies and planning come into conversation and need to play a critical role amongst schools.

This professional project, *Small Group Instruction: Formative Assessment*, explores peer-reviewed articles and data-based practices to help support reading instruction. The result of the project was a creation of five improvement activities and an implementation log of formative assessment strategies that can be implemented in a small group setting. When completing formative assessments in literacy, there are many skills that can be assessed. This project analyzes formative assessments and their positive effect in the classroom (Klute et al., 2017), specifically during small groups. Peer-reviewed articles, data, and evidence-based practices were analyzed when completing this project.

This project discovers five new strategies that are from evidence-based practices to use in a small group setting to improve instruction and student outcomes. The implementation log helps educators understand what strategies they have tried and understand what the outcome was to keep best practices in their classroom. Formative assessments are the main theme of this project.

Formative assessments help prove student learning, offer feedback to students, and help teachers guide their instruction.

Context

This project is rooted in my personal experience as a second-year teacher. Working in a Title 1 school with about 250 students enrolled from kindergarten through fifth grade. There are two classrooms per grade level; we have a range of diversity in our school population. There is also a wide range of student needs in our school. Our student population consists of dual-household, low-income, multilingual students and coming to school carrying trauma. Our school is the house of our district's Disabled Learning Community (DLC), where we have the best support for students who identify with this community. It is important to note that our school uses Response to Intervention (RTI) as the driver of decisions on students' academic achievement.

Four of the 12 teachers are in their first or second year of teaching, and three are new to the district. I currently teach third grade. It’s my first time, and working in a new grade level made me realize that planning material looks different in every grade level. There is no right way to teach the curriculum, but choosing what to teach is overwhelming. When it comes to small group planning, my teaching partner and I work for days to create the most effective reading material best fit for each group and their reading needs. This often leaves us tired and not worrying about the process or instruction because of how many decisions we made on pulling materials for the group. This impacts my instruction because I am not learning effective strategies, but rather finding good materials.

Currently, we have been approved to only teach Tier 1 material, not to be confused with interventions or Tier 2 and Tier 3 reading resources, which are supplemented in for more intensive teaching, during our small group reading. With our current whole group materials, there are limited teacher manuals for small group instruction. This means that our curriculum has student books, worksheets, and online components for small group instruction, but no teacher guidance. The small reading group has a four-day schedule, two days of independent instruction, and two days of being with a teacher actively practicing skills. This group's focus is on reading accuracy.

Our school is on a six-week data cycle; we have team meetings every six weeks to review student data. Often, we are seeing student results from Tier 1 instruction during this time. That means that we are not looking at student progress throughout the cycle, only the end data point. According to Platas (n.d.) When we look at data and see common errors or mistakes, it is impactful because we are able to address the problem in a new way. In my small group, their need is accuracy. When we are assessing accuracy throughout the six-week cycle, we can address the problem efficiently.

Rationale

This project is for professional purposes, such as professional growth and improving instruction. As a new teacher, I want to expand my instructional strategies to give my students better learning opportunities. Being able to have all of my students grow throughout the year is a task that I want to accomplish each year. Using formative assessments that are evidence-based will not only help my students meet their reading goals but also improve my teaching. Having the implementation log will help educators track student growth and formative assessments that

are effective, and guide instruction. I believe that using formative assessments as a guide in small groups can help educators quickly make adjustments to their instruction. This allows educators to give feedback while the concepts are still being taught, which gives students meaningful feedback (Klute et al., 2017). This implementation log is not limited to a specific curriculum, because of district requirements, each of these strategies are able to be implemented easily and with little to no preparation.

Schools have adopted a curriculum to drive whole-group instruction, also referred to as Tier 1 instruction (Kim & Wei, n.d.). Often, this curriculum has a lot of components but not a lot of guidance. This leaves instructional strategies open for teachers to use their professional judgement on what students need. New teachers usually come out of programs ready to teach whole-group instruction. They have spent most of their time planning lessons and learning strategies. Small group instruction is not always emphasized in programs, but it is a valuable use of instructional time. Tier 1 is instruction that all students are a part of using the core material. In a small group setting, there is an opportunity for specific focus skills and improvement in students' skills (Felts, 2019). Small group instruction is core material, but using Tier 2 as support for student outcomes.

When it comes to small group instruction, what to do is not always straightforward. New teachers may not know how to plan for small group instruction and best practices. Teachers spend a lot of effort knowing what skills to focus on to increase student skills. One tool to use to guide and monitor small group instruction is formative assessments. Formative assessments can help give teachers actionable data that they can use to drive instruction and adjust if needed (Vortia & Klenam Djokoto, 2025). This allows teachers to make changes to lessons so students can make growth in the 6-week data cycle.

Theory

This project aims to develop a series of improvement activities that were developed from evidence based research. These activities are for Tier 1 support, but can be used in a Tier 2 group. The goal is to use these resources in my own classroom and track data from either the data tracker in the improvement activity document, or the implementation log. I will then share my findings with other k-5 teachers in my building to help support their literacy instruction. Combining formative assessments with small group instruction will increase student outcomes through direct feedback and a corrective approach.

Benjamin Bloom has theories such as the cognitive domain, that rely on the teaching and learning process (Chandio et al., 2016). Bloom's Revised Taxonomy's cognitive domain has six levels of teaching and learning: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The taxonomy was created to assist teachers in aligning lessons and assessments. He thought that creating this framework would help teachers plan and ensure that lessons were focused on increasing student outcomes (Stapleton-Corcoran, 2023). Bloom highlights the importance of assessments of student learning. He also noticed some gaps in instruction and assessments. He wanted more instructional tools for teachers to use to increase student achievement.

The thought from Bloom's Revised Taxonomy was that giving assessments, direct feedback, and a clear process to ensure students' learning gaps would be filled, "formative assessment's purpose is to give students information, or feedback, on their learning" (Guskey, 2005, p. 3). He emphasizes that feedback alone will not change student outcomes, but correcting student misconceptions and errors is what is impactful.

Formative assessments will help bridge the gap between instruction and assessment. It serves as a continuous check-in where direct feedback is given to correct misconceptions. Chandio et al. (2016) state that formative assessment practices improve both the teacher and student outcomes. Bloom's taxonomy and the levels within his framework help support my project and the importance of formative assessment. His belief in formative assessments and improving student outcomes supports my research findings on evidence-based formative assessment strategies.

Standard Alignment

This professional project aligns with the Master of Science in Education: Reading (MSEd Reading) learning outcomes. I am also adding a reading endorsement, which includes standards from the International Literacy Association. These standards are present in my practicum courses, which I am also listing below.

Effectively apply the professional content expertise, knowledge, skills, and dispositions of their education profession.

MSEd Reading Learning Outcomes

1. Use research and evidence to develop environments that support and assess learning and their own professional practice.
2. Show commitment to and develop professional education leadership attributes.

This project meets the requirements of both learning outcomes by using Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy to support and improve small group reading instruction. Also by meeting with my Title 1 teacher and literacy coach to help develop the implementation log to meet students and educators needs.

International Literacy Association Standards

- Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction: Candidates use foundational knowledge to design literacy curricula to meet the needs of learners, especially those who experience difficulty with literacy; design, implement, and evaluate small-group and individual evidence-based literacy instruction for learners; collaborate with teachers to implement effective literacy practices.

This standard is met by my project being based around formative assessments in literacy small groups. I have provided multiple activities for educators to implement in their literacy small groups, with data tracking logs to help drive student progress. These data tracking sheets were created in collaboration with my Title 1 teacher and literacy coach.

- Standard 4: Diversity and Equity: Candidates demonstrate knowledge of research, relevant theories, pedagogies, and essential concepts of diversity and equity; demonstrate an understanding of themselves and others as cultural beings; create classrooms and schools that are inclusive and affirming; advocate for equity at school, district, and community levels.

I have met this standard by supporting my students' literacy achievement at the Title 1 school I work out. Providing them with direct feedback and creating my lessons with Bloom's Revised Taxonomy in mind helps have relevant concepts in my instructional practices.

- Standard 5: Literacy Learners and the Learning Environment: Candidates meet the developmental needs of all learners and collaborate with school personnel to use a variety of print and digital materials to engage and motivate all learners; integrate digital

technologies in appropriate, safe, and effective ways; foster a positive climate that supports a literacy-rich learning environment.

This standard supports my project because of the multiple activities that were created to assess student progress during small group reading. Each activity involves a different level of knowledge and all are differentiated for students' learning styles. For example, there are multiple choice questions, share outs, explaining reasoning, and movement within the suggested activities. Another way this standard supports my project is based on the way I collaborated with different members in my building, our literacy coach, and Title 1 teacher.

Project Implementation

The project's first phase was researching resources that supported formative assessments in the classroom and articles that were peer-reviewed. I also searched for Bloom's Taxonomy and formative assessment alignment to support the process of including teachers to improve their instructional practices. During the middle of this project, I created an implementation log of formative assessment strategies that you can use during small group instruction. I met with my literacy coach and Title 1 teacher to help create this log to be easily accessible for all educators. The final phase includes reflecting on the new strategies and implementing them in my small groups for the next school year.

The research is broken down into four major themes. These include:

1. Formative assessment as an Instructional Tool: Using formative assessments in small group reading instruction. Bloom's Taxonomy and his ideas on corrective feedback with formative assessments.

2. Small Group Planning: Reading curriculum does not always come with small group material and teacher instructions. Supporting small group instruction with formative assessments can be a great tool.
3. Evidence-Based Practices and Professional Growth: Learning effective formative assessments for small group instruction can also be implemented in a whole group setting, which expands teachers' ability to teach effective instruction.
4. Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners: Using formative assessments can help drive students' skills in a Tier 1 setting.

Professional Growth

The research and process of this project help identify strategies that can be implemented in the classroom. Teachers can use this project to understand why formative assessments are needed in small groups and gain knowledge of how to incorporate them into their own classroom. Action may be the most important piece of formative assessments. As I was researching this project, I learned that without any action, formative assessments are not effective. This project, *Small Group Instruction: Formative Assessment,* uses evidence-based strategies and support from Bloom and his theory on formative assessment to credit the research.

Student outcomes benefit from this project. School districts in Oregon are expecting a change in the required assessments that are taken throughout the school year. Data will then become- if it is not already- the main topic of discussion. This project will prepare educators for the data-driven decisions and changes that are happening.

Continuing my educational career, I will be using these strategies to guide my lessons and share with other educators. As I am unsure about how I want to use this degree, but as a general

education teacher, reading specialist, or literacy coach, I will be able to use these strategies anywhere in the education world. Being a general education teacher, I will be able to take this information straight to the classroom. Playing into a leadership role, sharing and demonstrating how to use formative assessments in the classroom. A reading specialist will be able to use these assessments in small groups or on an individual student who needs more intensive instruction.

Conclusion

This project demonstrates the process of finding and implementing strategies that are evidence-based. *Small Group Instruction: Formative Assessment* shows how important action is in the classroom. It helps take the question out of "how do I ensure that all my students are successful?" and provides teachers with ways to plan for student success. *Small Group Instruction: Formative Assessment* shows how I want to grow as an educator in any way that I can to help support my students in meeting their personal goals. This project also pushes me into a leadership role by creating resources, like the implementation log, for colleagues to use in their classrooms.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this literature review is to discover research about effective formative assessments that will be used in a small group reading setting. This literature review focuses on the idea of "actionable formative assessments that are focused on improving literacy instruction." Throughout this literature review, I relied on Bloom's Taxonomy and Bloom's theory of formative assessment to focus and theorize findings. These findings are all strategies that can be used to improve teacher instruction and student outcomes.

Formative assessments are critical in the classroom; giving feedback to students has been proven to be a support to student learning by filling in gaps and correcting misconceptions (Yale University, 2017). Unlike summative assessments, which capture students' learning at the end of a unit, formative assessments offer teachers insight into what students are learning throughout the unit. Formative assessments can be short quizzes, tasks, or observations made by the teacher. Feedback allows educators to take action in their students' learning by seeing what is going well in their teaching, what strategies are beneficial, and what might need to be adjusted.

When planning lessons, it is important for teachers to think about what students already know about the topic, which is called prior knowledge. Educators can adjust their teaching when they have an idea of what students know and what they need to know (Yan & Chiu, 2022). This also helps teachers catch misconceptions that students may have about the subject being taught. Prior knowledge helps students make connections with what they are learning and what they already know. Once teachers have gathered students' prior knowledge, finding ways to make connections from the content to their already established ideas can solidify learning targets to reach mastery for all students.

Theory

Bloom's Taxonomy by Benjamin Bloom is a hierarchy that was created for "curriculum, activities, and assessments" in 1956 (Vinay, n.d.). Bloom's taxonomy is a six-level taxonomy that is built upon cognitive skills. Since Bloom's first release of the taxonomy, the framework has undergone revisions. One major change in the framework is the names of the six levels, the "action words" to better describe what learners are doing in each process (Vinay, n.d.). As of 2001, Bloom's Taxonomy is referred to as the Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, tiered into lower-level cognitive skills to higher-level cognitive skills; these levels are *Remember*, *Understand*, *Apply*, *Analyze*, *Evaluate*, and *Create* (Adams, 2015). These levels have had a large impact on education. Many decisions, such as lesson planning, curriculum building, and assessment processes, have been created with Bloom's Revised Taxonomy in mind.

The taxonomy is important in education because it challenges educators to use these levels when designing instruction. Educators are ensuring that students are 'doing' in the lessons, they have objects to teach, and ensure students are meeting the objectives. Stapleton-Corcoran (2023) described each level from the lowest level of thinking to the highest: *Remember*, retrieving knowledge from memory, *Understand*, determining meanings, *Apply*, using a procedure, *Analyze*, breaking material down, *Evaluate*, making judgments, and *Create*, new work. The deeper the level, the more knowledge students need to use, which means they are doing more in the lesson (Adams, 2015). When students are doing more than retrieving knowledge from memory, determining meanings, and using a procedure, they are stepping away from foundational skills and require more cognitive processing time to answer questions. This is how students' reading minds should be developing.

Bloom is related to formative assessment because he is connecting the gap between learning the content and assessing the students' understanding of the content. Bloom is providing a way for teachers to check in on their students' learning progress before the summative assessment. In literacy, assessment often involves responding to texts or practicing a specific reading skill. Adesoji (2018) states that “The development of low, medium or higher order cognitive skill by the student is dependent on the student himself or herself and the teacher's output.” This supports the idea that with student effort alone, growth is not guaranteed; teachers must be effective in their instruction as well.

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy is significant to student learning because it provides teachers with the ability to dive deeper into student learning. Depending on the literacy skill that is being taught and practiced, levels of thinking may change (Irvine, n.d.). Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy is layered in an order of thinking format; the questions that are embedded in the lessons will be in one of the 6 levels of taxonomy. Students are impacted by the level of questioning that is in the lessons (Reynolds, 2019). When students are pushed into a new higher level, they need to use more cognitive skills in order to understand the question and task. Oftentimes, a lower-level thinking requires a quick recall, not a deep level of cognitive processing.

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy is the foundation for teachers to reference when supporting student learning and instruction. Higher-level thinking, cognitive processing, learning objectives, and feedback are essential to this project. Leaning on Bloom and his framework helps support the research and findings of the final product and helps implement the strategies in the next school year to assess effectiveness.

Key Terms

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy- a framework that is broken into three domains: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective. This framework assists educators with creating assessments, learning objectives, and guiding instruction (Stapleton-Corcoran, 2023).

Cognitive Processing- the ability to store, acquire, and use information in the brain, often referred to in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as a critical thinking process (Adams, 2015).

Formative Assessment- happens before, during, and after a lesson to inform the teacher where their students are meeting learning objectives (Messier, 2022).

Prior Knowledge- skills and knowledge that students have from previous lessons or experiences (Hailikari et al., 2008).

Summative Assessment- an end-of-unit test that is done for the purpose of seeing what students learned over the course of a unit (Messier, 2022).

Tier 1- all students are receiving this instruction, which is usually core curriculum (DeFlitch, 2025).

Tier 2- a response to students who are not exceeding with tier 1, often it is grouping students into focus skills that they are lacking (DeFlitch, 2025).

Tier 3- the most intensive response to students not growing in skill sets (DeFlitch, 2025).

Theme 1- Impact of Formative Assessment

Formative assessments are a process to see student progress while a unit is being taught. These assessments are for addressing errors and filling in gaps before the unit is over (Yale University, 2017). Educators use this knowledge to inform their teaching. Formative assessments should be created with the end goal in mind. Yale University (2017) suggests that the purpose of

formative assessments is to catch misconceptions, but also to provide feedback to correct misconceptions that students have. In the classroom, teachers can give the assessment and immediately act on the results. Formative assessments are used for a main purpose: “It reinforces precisely what students were expected to learn, identifies what was learned well, and describes what needs to be learned better.” (Guskey, 2005, p. 6). This is why formative assessments are such an important piece of student learning.

Many instructional strategies, like formative assessments, while proven effective by research and backed by data, are often not implemented due to a lack of teacher training (Vortia & Klenam Djokoto, 2025). Professional development varies based on school and district needs. Student outcomes should be at the forefront of professional development implementation, but this can only happen if teachers are taught strategies. If schools need more tools and methods of improving student outcomes, formative assessments should be shared more (Lange et al., 2012). Before addressing strategies for formative assessments, it is important to share what teachers need to know about their students before planning and teaching.

Alber (2011) states many strategies to use in the classroom that will activate prior knowledge. One of these is a class brainstorm web (Alber, 2011). This is where teachers use a word or a phrase, and students share anything they know about the topic. A brainstorm web is accessible for all students because there is no pressure to be “right or wrong.” This activity also serves as practice to review think-pair-shares and establish a positive classroom culture. Think-Pair shares encourage critical thinking skills, which can prepare students for higher-level cognitive skills (Kaddoura, 2013, p. 4). Another important piece of a brainstorm web is that it serves as a formative assessment. When students complete formative assessments, teachers are able to see what students know about the topic. Doing this before the lesson can help teachers

differentiate for all students based on what they already know. Another strategy that can be used for a quick check-in as the lesson progresses is to ask students a question that has a short answer, and they write their answer on a piece of paper or whiteboard (Dyer, 2026). This helps educators see if students are progressing through the lesson.

Considering students' prior knowledge will help educators know where to start when planning for their formative assessments. Another factor of planning for formative assessments is knowing what tier you are teaching. In this project, Tier 2 will be the targeted tier. Students in Tier 2 have gaps in their learning, and teachers need to find the focus skill that students are receiving more support in. Students in Tier 1 are moved to Tier 2 when there is a missing chunk in their education. Kim & Wei (n.d.) mention that, as formative assessments are used in the classroom, students should be constantly moving in and out of groups to receive focused and intentional content. This means that as students are successful in Tier 2, they are moved into another group that will meet their needs. This will allow them to see what skill students will be getting assessed on (Xuan et al., 2022). Tier 2 supports are focused on groups of learners who are missing the same focus skill. Xuan et al. (2022) note that increases in student achievement will result from focusing on differentiated instruction and monitoring student progress.

One way to conduct a formative assessment is to start with quick, ungraded check-ins where the teacher offers the student feedback to correct the mistake (Ralston, 2025). These quick formative assessments can include an entrance ticket to gauge what they remembered from the previous lesson and an exit ticket to gauge what they retained from today’s lesson (Thomas, 2019). Another quick way to check for understanding is to have a short quiz that is related to the topic, but is formatted similarly to the summative assessment, to familiarize students with the way to complete the end-of-the-unit test.

Making data-based decisions is based on student performance. In a study where Felts (2019) focused on effective literacy instruction that would improve fluency scores. The instruction took place in a small group, where the structure was ‘I do’, ‘We do’, ‘You do’. While the students are independently completing their part of the lesson, the teachers are listening and giving immediate feedback, similar to how formative assessments are used. These results had a 22% increase in students' fluency skills from Winter to Spring, using their district's assessment, which is Fastbridge. Another study by Xuan et al. (2022) wanted to see if formative assessments are improving students' reading achievement. Xuan et al. (2022) looked at multiple literacy improvement studies and found that “formative assessment produces a positive effect (ES = + 0.18) on reading achievement.” (Xuan et al., 2022, Discussion, para. 1). These two studies focused on literacy instruction and how differentiation and supports help improve reading success for students.

Theme 2- Application of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy is built upon increasing students' cognitive skills. Applying Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy in the classroom improves student outcomes and teacher performance (Stapleton-Corcoran, 2023). Learning objectives, activities, and assessments can all include pieces of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. Because of Bloom’s six different levels of cognitive skills and knowledge, teachers are able to make connections with the content they are teaching (Stapleton-Corcoran, 2023). Using Bloom’s Revised levels helps set a purpose for each lesson and establishes a clear outcome.

Each level in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy has a purpose. Adams (2015) suggests that the lowest or bottom level requires the least amount of cognitive processing, and the top level needs

the most amount of cognitive processing. In the classroom, this would look like using verbs that describe each level's name. For example, if the teacher chose *Remember* as their lesson objective, a related verb for their learning objective could be identify, define, or select. While a relating verb to *Create* could be construct, invent, or plan. The purpose of using Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as learning objectives is "A well-written learning objective outlines the knowledge, skills, and/or attitude the learners will gain from the educational activity and does so in an observable and measurable way." (Stapleton-Corcoran, 2023, How? Section, para. 1)Measuring student progress throughout their learning is a key aspect of formative assessments.

Using Bloom's Revised Taxonomy for creating learning objectives leads to designing activities around the verbs in the learning objectives. This assists with keeping learning clear and consistent throughout the lesson. By creating learning objectives using Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, lessons are focused on student activities (Larsen et al., 2022). Aligning the objectives with the activities students will be doing ensures that the learning is intentional. Students who participate in focused learning activities are more likely to be engaged in their learning and have higher learning outcomes (Wayan Widiana et al., 2023). Depending on what level of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy on which the learning object is based will determine the types of activities students will be doing. For example, if the level from Bloom's Revised Taxonomy is *Apply*, and the learning objective states that students will practice a specific skill, that is what students will be doing in the lesson. The primary goal is for teachers to assess students as they progress through the unit, doing meaningful activities (Wayan Widiana et al., 2023). Formative assessments and summative assessments are a purposeful step in the learning process.

Assessing student learning is not only to see if students made growth towards the unit goal, but also to look at teacher effectiveness (Chandio et al., 2016). Teachers can make

data-based decisions about their students' progress by using assessments (Tayem & Bourgeois, 2024). Formative and summative assessments can both be used within Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. As learning objectives are used for purposeful and measurable learning, teachers need to measure student learning. This can be done throughout the unit, where there are opportunities for students to have corrective feedback, and at the end of the unit, where teachers can make a conclusion on what the student learned during the lesson (Yale University, 2017). An important piece to note is that during the assessments, teachers are using the same cognitive level of thinking that the lesson objective is focused on, which creates a clear goal for students.

Theme 3- Evidence-Based Formative Literacy Assessments

Using formative assessment in literacy serves a purpose for teachers to assess literacy skills and ensure they are receiving targeted instruction to support their learning (Kim & Wei, n.d.). Evidence-based means that the strategies being used have data to support their effectiveness. Strategies that include "problem solving, drawing inferences, deductive reasoning, and creative expression" (Guskey, 2005, p. 8) are effective due to the higher-level learning objectives that are created from Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. Strategies not only guide instruction, but it gives educators clear evidence of student progress.

One strategy for implementing formative assessments is a quick check for understanding. Doing this allows teachers to quickly see who is progressing in the unit and who is not. This is a way for teachers to make instructional adjustments if needed (Yan & Chiu, 2022). A *think-pair-share* is when students are given a question, for example, "What is a word that has the -oi sound in it?" Students would have time to think privately, then, when prompted, share their answer with a peer. Giving students uninterrupted time to think about their answer allows them

to process and prepare their answer (Stahl, 1994). Teachers are to walk around the room during this time and try to listen for students who are giving right and wrong answers. If a wrong answer is heard, quick corrective feedback is needed. After that, students will have the opportunity to share their answer with the class (Dyer, 2026). This strategy would be effective in a small group setting, as it would allow the teacher to listen to everyone, and it would be more time-efficient.

Another strategy suggested by Dyer (2026) has a purpose for students to explain what they know. After giving students a question about the lesson, for example, what does the ‘e’ do in a CVCE word (Consonant, Vowel, Consonant, -e), such as ‘fake’. CVCE words are often referred to as ‘bossy e'. Students can write or tell their answer. Asking questions that reflect on what students learned helps students have a deeper understanding (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy, 2013). In Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, this would align with the level *Understand,* and the verb explain. Students are going to understand the ‘bossy e’ and explain its purpose. There is clear alignment between the learning objective and assessment using Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy.

During a lesson that requires students to obtain multiple skills, an exit ticket may be a great way to have students stop and reflect on their learning so far (Dyer, 2026). Giving students a short quiz that includes the focus skills learned requires them to recall information from the lesson. Exit tickets are used after a new stage of learning. Teachers are looking for pieces to highlight, ideas to reteach, and give extensions to students who are showing that specific need based on their response (Little, 2019). Recalling could be categorized in Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy as the level *Remember*. Although a low level of cognitive ability is needed for this specific assessment, allowing students time to reflect, practice, and think about the answer, they

are deepening their knowledge (Messier, 2022). Educators will be able to gain insight into what students need more practice with the skill, and what students are ready to move on, which will provide an opportunity for specific students to be in a Tier 2 small group.

Conclusion

Overall, aligning learning with Bloom's Revised Taxonomy creates an impactful learning experience for students. Learning objectives are able to easily translate into actions that students will be doing. This will allow educators to create formative assessments that are specific to the content being taught. Formative assessments can be helpful, but the most important thing to remember when giving students formative assessments is to take action on them and give students correct feedback (Guskey, 2005). Without corrective feedback, students will not know what they are doing wrong and will not make progress towards the end-of-unit goal. In the implementation log, there is a section called 'action plan', which is where educators describe the feedback and next steps for students.

Chapter 3: Project Designs

Context

I work as a third-grade teacher, at South Umpqua School District, where there are about 240 students. My classroom has 24 students, two of whom are in our school's Disabled Learning Community (DLC), where they receive their education. I have six students who are on IEPs for speech and academic support. One student is identified as Talented and Gifted (TAG) and is in our TAG program. My students' reading ability ranges from a kindergarten level of letter sounds to a fourth-grade reading level and reading 130 words correct per minute (WCPM). This information is important to understand that each of my students receives instruction that improves their reading ability to make growth in their reading ability during this school year.

To best meet students' literacy needs, we have mixed both of the third-grade classes into groups that support the literacy skills they are missing. For example, we have seven reading groups that have my class and the other third-grade class. The groups that I meet with are our students who are just below or at grade level in literacy skills. These groups meet every other day, except on Wednesdays. One group is working on accuracy, and the other on fluency. These focuses are based on their DIBELS scores. DIBELS is the program we use for progress monitoring and benchmark assessments. For this project, I will be using the reading group that is centered on their fluency and accuracy for my implementation log on the data collection piece.

It is important to note that this reading group is a Tier 2 support, where students are receiving instruction that is specific to their needs. Each year, we will have students who need support with their reading. Understanding how to support students in Tier 2 will improve my lessons by creating meaningful and goal-focused objectives. Adding formative assessments will track the progress of students and prove effective instruction, or spot gaps. No matter what group

of students I will be working with, these improvement activities will be able to support their reading goals.

Design Method

The project, *Small Group Reading Instruction: Formative Assessments,* was first started by focusing on third-grade literacy skills. All formative assessment strategies in this log are easily implemented with third-grade students in a small group reading setting. It is important to note that this implementation log will be planned and created during this project, but will be used and data will be tracked in next year's reading groups. An implementation log tracks student progress throughout the unit. Small group reading is created for teachers to work with a smaller group of students on a specific skill (Felts, 2019). Assessments focus on students' reading accuracy. Given the lack of structure and guidance for teachers when teaching small groups in our curriculum, this project focuses on small group reading.

After deciding which specific skill to focus on and where in the classroom I would conduct my research, I began. I started to search for three main elements. One being an emphasis on a foundation of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. This is to ensure alignment between theory and practice. In research, I looked for clear objectives and assessment alignment, similar to how Bloom's Revised Taxonomy is designed.

Another emphasis was on literacy. Teaching reading effectively is something that is so important in a student's educational career. Teachers need to be intentional and "thoughtful" when teaching literacy to students to not limit their cognitive processing (Applegate et al., 2022). Using the implementation log, I have focused on finding data-based strategies that improve

students' reading ability. Having clear and focused goals for students to reach ensures that instruction is intentional and will help students meet their reading goals.

The last element I was looking for in research was improvement scores. I have learned a lot about formative assessments and their importance, but I needed evidence of student progress to continue to the next phase. Having evidence of student progress helps show the value of formative assessments and helps rationalize using them in the classroom. Each article with improvement scores had strategies that they used in the learning process, and that was inserted into the implementation log.

Finally, after a couple of weeks of research, a system of implementation of small group reading formative assessments were created. I created five improvement activities with data tracking available. I also created an implementation log which is a template teachers can use to track formative assessments in their classrooms. The implementation log and improvement activities are separate from each other, but data can be inputted from the improvement activities into the implementation log if the teachers wish. This includes the strategy being used, what it was assessing, how feedback was given to students, the results of the assessment, and the action plan. These elements are important to the project because it tracks student progress and the next steps for when students are ready to move on or if they need more practice.

This project was developed over one academic term. This is the research that is needed to understand, prove, and implement formative assessments into the classroom. It is the foundation for my implementation, which I will be using and sharing next year with colleagues. In our district, we are focusing on planning our instruction to be clear and aligned. Using a foundation of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy, such as the cognitive domains, helped form the implementation log will help educators have lessons that have intentional instructional materials.

Data Collection/ Evaluation Procedures

This project was successful because I found formative assessment strategies that will be implemented in my classroom next year. These formative assessments were backed by research and were proven to be effective based on the data collected. I sorted through articles that included student growth from formative assessments. I used the evidence-based strategies as the driver of my implementation sheet. These resources also have a connection to Bloom's Revised Taxonomy either the learning objectives, or planning for clear and intentional instruction.

Data from these formative assessments will be collected next school year. I will be using the implementation log of strategies to assess their effectiveness on student learning. I will also be using this data to share with colleagues who want to track student progress more frequently than our data meetings which occur every six weeks. Success will be measured by student growth from using the strategies in the classroom.

Students benefited from this project because of the high-quality research I conducted this school year. Just by researching alone, I implemented direct and corrective feedback in my small groups. Another way that students will benefit is by the teaching that will take place when this implementation log is in place. Tracking student data will be easy for teachers to do, and trends can be spotted. This will result in students receiving feedback on their reading.

I professionally grew by expanding my understanding on formative assessment and Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. Another way I grew was by collaborating with my colleagues. Our Title 1 teacher and our literacy coach were able to give me their insight and expertise on what is necessary for data tracking, and what are easily accessible strategies for teachers to include in

their instruction. I was able to bring a resource to my peers and explain the process of the implementation log and the rationale behind it.

Chapter 4: Final Project

Introduction

During this project I created improvement activities, the deliverables for this project are five improvement activities that support student growth by using formative assessments. I also created an implementation log. This is where I designed a data tracking sheet for educators to track formative assessments that are done in their classroom Implementation log , figure 1. The implementation log and improvement activities are separate, but can be done together. Within the improvement activities document there is a short write up of all the activities, including the materials to make copies of, and a system of data tracking, this is to help teachers have easy access to the materials Improvement Activities , figure 2. While creating the improvement Activities I met with my literacy coach and Title 1 teacher to brainstorm engagement strategies for these activities.

Each of these Improvement Activities is paired with the materials needed and a data tracker for teachers to use. The data tracker is designed for teachers to easily take data as the activity is taking place. The names of these activities are ABCD Cards, Entrance Ticket, Goal-Setting, Nonsense Words Flash Cards, and Basketball Discussion. These are all in the Improvement Activities in the order of which they are mentioned.

Improvement Activities

ABCD Cards is where students are given a few multiple choice questions and they answer the question by holding up the appropriate card, for example if they think the answer is A, they hold up A (Dyer, 2026). The purpose of this activity is to check on students' progress during the lesson. Educators can use this as a guide to see where students are at and who needs to

receive immediate feedback. An extension of this is for teachers to ask students to explain or justify their reasoning for choosing A, B, C, or D.

This activity improves students' learning by offering immediate feedback during the lesson to "positively enhance students' learning" (Xuan et al., 2022, Introduction Section, para. 1).The idea of higher order thinking in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy is also supported in this activity because of the focus on learning objectives and what students should be doing in the activity (Stapleton-Corcoran, 2023). On the Improvement Activities template there is also a chart for teachers to easily track what students have answered the question right or wrong. This is the same form where they can input their questions to have them all on the same page and not overwhelm the teacher. While they are planning for their reading group lesson would be an appropriate time for them to create the questions they will ask.

The entrance ticket is used as a check in at the beginning of a lesson to see what students remember from a previous lesson or their prior knowledge (Dyer, 2026). Educators can use this as a check in to see if a quick review is needed or if a specific skill is needing more practice. Bloom's Revised Taxonomy lists remember as a lower level of learning, but in this context it is valuable for teachers to know what their students remembered from the previous lesson (Chandio et al., 2016). Using the data tracker included on the Improvement Activities document can help teachers remember what students they can go and repeat an activity similar later in the lesson to assess their mastery.

This activity can support any literacy skill, asking a question based on fluency will help support students' understanding. Due to my literacy focus being fluency, an example of an entrance ticket is to write a sentence on the ticket and read in the appropriate expression. If the sentence was a question, speak with the appropriate tone.

Goal setting is an activity that supports self-regulation, where students are invested in their reading and are actively trying to meet a specific goal they made. This improvement activity would need to have a supported one-minute reading passage that is from the curriculum, there is a sample passage within the improvement activity document. Doing this increases engagement which can be helpful for students when meeting in a small group. This strategy has shown to have a positive impact on student motivation (Klute et al., 2017). Educators are able to increase student motivation and track their progress at the same time.

On the improvement activity document there is a template that contains students' current words correct per minute (WCPM) and their goal for WCPM. This is to improve reading fluency in students. It serves as a formative assessment as well because teachers are motoring student growth using their data tracker. Another reason why goal setting is important is due to motivation. Motivation is mentioned in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy when talking about student-centered learning, which is present in these activities.

Nonsense Words Flash Cards is the next activity. This is where educators are using nonsense words as assessing students' knowledge of phonics. Phonics are important when trying to build fluent readers. This looks like holding up the flashcards to the whole group, waiting about 10 seconds for every student to have enough time to process. Then when you are ready to hear students try the nonsense words to give a thumbs up to hear everyone. Immediate feedback to students is required for students to make progress. Another way of doing this is to privately have each student try the nonsense words to hear individual answers and give feedback after each word.

Including a formative assessment where students are reading nonsense words ensures that they have the knowledge of letter sounds to be able to read unknown words, even ones that

do not mean anything in the English language. “When students acquire decoding skills, they are able to accurately read words and passages” (Kang & Shin, 2019 para. 2). Doing this as a formative assessment can give educators insight on what specific letter sounds that the students need to work on to increase their decoding skills which will support their reading fluency.

Basketball Discussion is the last improvement activity. During this activity students are a part of a group discussion called ‘Basketball discussion’ (Dyer, 2026). This is when teachers are asking a skill specific question and want to assess students' knowledge. When teachers ask the question it is important to give each student time to think about the answer. Once students have been given enough thinking time, a ball is thrown to a student for an answer. These answers can be short or explanatory.

An example of an activity that is focused on fluency is where students will be passed the ball to answer the question. Focusing on questions that are about expression and speed will help students understand their reading expectation. For example if the teacher reads in a ‘robot voice’ and asks students if they read the sentence with proper expression, they would need to answer and explain their reasoning, or read the sentence with proper expression. This helps students practice appropriate reading fluency.

Implementation Log

The implementation log is for educators to use as an extra way of tracking the formative assessments from the improvement activities that they try in their classroom. This log is set up for reflection as teachers input for each column. The purpose of this log is for educators to find out what improvement activities ‘work’ for their students. A formative assessment that ‘works’ is one that gives educators information about how their students are progressing with the skill. The

implementation log also serves as a next step for educators. They are able to reflect on the data and act on what to do next. Using this implementation log is only for educators who want to track their students' growth when they are using specific strategies.

While designing the implementation log, it was important to ensure that each column was beneficial to educators. These columns are date, participant, lesson objective, skill, strategy, results, and action plan. Explaining the importance of each column is needed to show how the information is beneficial to teachers when data tracking.

Information like the date and the amount of participants is helpful to know when conducting formative assessments. If a skill has been practiced for a few days and student results are showing that they have not mastered the skill, educators can give more time to students before moving on to the next skill. Knowing how many participants are in the group is important for data collection and for tracking progress. During data meetings, where educators meet with the literacy team and discuss how students are progressing and if the group they are in is still meeting their needs, students often get moved around to other groups that will help meet their new needs. Teachers could bring in their implementation log data to show that the students in that reading group are progressing well or if they need more intensive instruction.

Having the lesson objective present on the implementation log ensures that the project supports students' goals. Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy supports having lesson objectives clear in the lesson. The lesson objective should be identifiable based on what the students are doing in the lesson. Including this on the implementation log supports the clear focused activities that Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy highlights.

The next column, ‘skill,’ is there to have educators focus on the specific skill that they are assessing students on. This is for the skills that students are working on mastering. Having the

skill included will help educators know what strategy worked or didn't for that specific skill. The column has a connection with the lesson objective column. Bloom's idea of having each objective and skill aligned with the activity for students best results.

Listing what strategy they used to assess students' knowledge is important because it will help teachers find out what formative assessments are beneficial for their students. The improvement activities can be tracked using this log, but is not required by teachers, any formative assessment strategy they use can be inputted into this log.

Results are needed to prove the effectiveness of the strategy used. Keeping data on students can help refine teaching. Common trends are easily catchable as well when looking at student data, such as most of the students mastered this skill of decoding, or half of the students need a reteach on decoding with the 'ea' sound. As Platas (n.d), included in their research, discussing students' answers with them can be a way to investigate their knowledge on a specific skill and give direct feedback.

An action plan is listed on the log to support educators in thinking about the next step. These next steps can be whole group reteachers, individual reteach, or more practice in a specific area for a longer period of time. Each activity included in the improvement activities also has a simple data tracking paper that is simple and will encourage educators to teach and easily input data.

Conclusion

Research such as Bloom's Revised Taxonomy and formative assessments heavily supported this project. Using the levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy and the clear focused outcomes of student learning helped design each improvement activity and data tracking sheet.

Levels such as ‘remember’ are a lower order of thinking, but will still be valuable when assessing student knowledge. A higher level of thinking such as ‘create’, will let educators have a larger insight into what students can do. A large focus on building material that teachers can easily implement into their classroom with no training needed. Another focus of this log is to provide students with appropriate material based on their literacy goals. At times students may need a lower level skill, and other times they may need a higher level skill, using this implementation log will help identify what students need and how they respond to that level of thinking strategy.

Chapter 5: Reflection

The goal of this project was to focus on data-driven practices to help improve small group literacy instruction in my classroom. I was able to create low prep and easily actionable activities that teachers can implement in their classrooms. Recognizing that our curriculum is built to meet students' needs, but understanding that there needs to be more support during this time was the reason for starting this project.

Throughout this project I was able to informally collaborate and discuss the project with members of my literacy team. This helped me hear their expert opinions on engagement strategies and data. I gained leadership skills and knowledge on improving literacy instruction for my students. These grew my confidence as an educator and making decisions around literacy practices. Additionally, I have become more familiar with Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy and the alignment of standards, objectives, and student outcomes.

A drawback of this project was time, I got a late start to this project, I was behind a whole term. I worked tirelessly on finding relevant research and evidence of formative assessments to ensure that I have a strong foundation for the activities and implementation of these findings. This work was not implemented into my classroom yet, but I have a plan to implement them in my small group reading instruction next year. Using my district's small group reading materials with the formative assessment activities will create an inclusive environment for each student's reading needs.

Findings

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy was influential in the research and creation process. Through the research I found that formative assessments are heavily aligned with Bloom’s

Revised Taxonomy's learning objectives and cognitive domains. Formative assessments are a central focus throughout the project. I already knew the value of checking in on student progress throughout the learning process, but this project reinforced the importance of formative assessments. Specifically because of the direct feedback that students receive and adjustments that educators are able to make as they see results of these formative assessments.

During this project I was able to research formative assessments, data tracking, and student and educator growth. This supports the project's purpose, improving small group instruction to have a positive outcome of student growth with clear, focused instruction and provide materials to teachers. It was important for the materials provided to not be curriculum specific this way; "whatever the educators" schools adopted reading curriculum is, these resources can be implemented. Another important aspect was to have easy access to data tracking. Formative assessments are beneficial when educators act on them. I learned that having data trackers embedded in the activity allows teachers to track student progress during the lesson.

Standards

The project needed to meet five standards. Reviewing what each standard required me to accomplish was completed. These standards focused on differentiated learners, collaboration, leadership, literacy based engagement strategies, and relevant theories.

For standard one of MSEd Reading Learning Outcomes and Standard 4 of the International Literacy Association they were met because of the depth of research I conducted to complete this project, and that the focus was on learning environments that are bettering student learning. These standards are all about developing environments that are equitable and supportive based on research.

The last three standards were met by the design portion of this project. While creating this project, I met with two other professionals about the formative assessments to hear their ideas. I took their ideas and researched more about each one. This was not a collaborative project but I did have a few brainstorming sessions with my coworkers. This meets the standard by showing commitment to meet with others to implement a curriculum that is inclusive for students.

Limitations

Considering the time circumstances for this project, I was able to find and create valuable information and resources for my classroom. Due to unfortunate circumstances I was unable to complete this project the traditional way. I completed this project, start to finish, in seven weeks. This left me working day and night on research, editing, and creating resources that will serve educators for the better.

With the lack of time I had, I met with my Title 1 teacher and literacy coach to brainstorm ideas with them, and have discussions about engagement strategies. These were informal meetings, but valuable to hear their insight and expertise on the topics. Meeting with them allowed me to receive immediate resources that I could further investigate alone, such as engagement strategies, and data trackers that are easily accessible.

Adjustments

From the beginning of this project I initially wanted to get student data from my classroom and include my findings from completing an improvement strategy in my small

groups. Thinking of time and the quality of the work I wanted to produce I needed to keep my focus on the research and creation piece first. This adjustment helped me stay on track with finding and creating formative assessment strategies and ensuring each of them will help benefit student learning. Doing this will allow me to start the next school year with activities that meet the needs of my students.

Conclusion

Overall, this project served its purpose of using formative assessments in small group reading instruction. Another completed task in this project was finding materials that educators can implement in literacy small groups.

While completing this project I was able to think ahead to next year's students and their reading needs. While I may not be running a group that needs fluency practice, these activities can be easily adjusted to be focused on other reading skills. The importance of having clear focused activities is not just to improve student growth, but to also engage them in their own reading. These activities and data tracking charts will help educators find students' growth spots and celebrate progress.

One of the most meaningful parts of this project was seeing how passion can be an incredible motivator. At times of doubt, I was able to continue my research because I understand the need for using effective instructional strategies to improve student learning. Small groups are an important time of day, and without knowledge of the formative assessments and the important aspects like feedback, I would not be able to know if my students were benefiting from the instruction I am giving them.

Another important piece of this project was meeting with other educators in my building to gain knowledge from them and recognize the need for formative assessments that are easily incorporated in small groups. Using the data allows educators to accommodate each of their group members' needs. Educators can reteach and provide feedback to their students when looking at the outcomes of each activity.

Appendix

Figure 1 Implementation Log	Implementation log
Figure 2 Improvement Activity	Improvement Activities

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