**4 Formative Assessment Ideas to Try This Year**

**FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

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Interactive tools can make formative assessments engaging for high school students, helping teachers gain valuable insights to guide their work.

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Frequent formative assessment is incredibly important in every classroom; however, it can be boring and monotonous for students, leading to decreased engagement and effort. Fortunately, there’s no shortage of effective, easy-to-use, and fun activities that teachers can use to gain valuable insights into student learning and drive instructional decision-making. An added bonus is that these activities work whether students are learning in person or virtually.

**4 FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IDEAS TO TRY THIS YEAR**

1. Pixel art review: When I stumbled upon the concept of pixel art late last year, my students and I were both desperate for new ideas to reinvigorate our classroom formative assessments. I saw amazing pixel art activities on social media that teachers had created using Google Sheets. These activities require students to answer a question correctly to reveal images or messages on the spreadsheet. I almost immediately discounted this idea, partly because the examples I saw were math focused (I teach social studies) and partly because I’ve always had a fear of spreadsheets. However, after I dove into the idea behind pixel art, I was able to apply it to my content and my students.

We use [pixel art review activities](http://usingeducationaltechnology.com/pixel-art-review-for-social-studies-2/) at least weekly in our classroom. My students love that they can immediately see what they have missed and ask questions to clarify their understanding. Pixel art review activities are great for the beginning of class to assess prior knowledge, for the end to gain great feedback to drive future instruction, and during in-the-moment learning to give students a chance to reflect on where they are on the journey to achieving the learning target.

2. Interactive self-checks: Last year, my students and I enjoyed two full weeks of snow days. While I definitely wasn’t complaining about having my coffee in my recliner instead of at my desk, I knew we would need a content review upon our return to school. I also knew that a typical verbal review would likely be met with eye rolls from my students as they readjusted to being in school again. I decided to try something different, using an underused feature of Google Slides: [linking within the presentation](http://usingeducationaltechnology.com/creating-interactive-self-checks-in-google-slides/). Internal linking in Google Slides connects content within the presentation to text or images.

My students responded very well to these interactive self-checks. When I share these activities with them, I do so using a link on Google Classroom instead of making a copy for each student. This ensures that they will receive and work through a live version of the presentation in “present” mode, which is needed to properly get through the activity. These interactive self-checks provide students with a great way to reflect on what they have learned and what questions they still have about the content.

3. Blooket: When I first learned about [Blooket](http://usingeducationaltechnology.com/using-blooket-in-the-classroom/), a game-based formative assessment platform, I thought it looked like more of an elementary to middle school–level tool that might not be right for my juniors and seniors. However, the third-quarter slump prompted me to give it a try, and I’m so glad I did.

Blooket also integrates with Quizlet, allowing you to use Quizlet decks that you have created when you make your Blooket games—a huge time-saver. If you take advantage of the Quizlet/Blooket relationship, you’ll be ready to play your Blooket game in less than five minutes.

We use Blooket as an entrance activity to review or evaluate prior learning or as a formative-assessment activity after viewing an instructional video. One of my personal favorite uses is to create a QR code that links to a game and display it outside my classroom so that my students can scan it in passing to quickly review content using one of their favorite games.

4. Response validation through Google Forms: This vastly underused feature can be used on short-answer, paragraph, or checkbox questions on a Google Form. It requires the correct response to a question before the form can be submitted. If someone answers a question incorrectly or enters invalid data, it gives the user a “try again,” “not quite right,” or other message of whatever you choose, prompting them to give it another try.

To use this feature, create your question and then click the three little dots at the bottom of the question. Then, choose response validation. Next, you’ll want to select “regular expression” from the first drop-down menu. Then, you’ll choose what the responses should include or not include in the second drop-down menu. Finally, you’ll enter the correct response and an error text. Without an error text, your students will see the correct answer.

The response validation feature is a great option for formative assessment, but not necessarily for the data that teachers receive on the spreadsheet because all of the responses will be correct. I love using this feature on forms because of the conversations I have with my students as they proceed through the questions and reflect on their learning.

These four formative assessment activities are effective and easy-to-use in any classroom. They provide teachers with valuable insights and students with a fun, engaging, and constructive learning experience.