

# Foreword

The play on the term *formative assessment*, reflected in the words of this resource’s title, *INFORMative Assessment*, was the first indication that I would learn from this book. I yearned to be back in the classroom with the insights, ideas, and inspiration gained from reading it.

Formative assessment has come to the forefront of mathematics teaching and learning in recent years. There have been attempts to initiate formative assessment, often named differently, through the years of my career. One of the first elementary school mathematics projects in which I was involved called it *continuous assessment*:

Continuous assessment of each child’s progress is an integral part of DMP [Developing Mathematical Processes]. Only with a continuing evaluation of the children’s progress can you build an instructional program that evolves from the children’s experience and avoids being overly repetitious while guarding against teaching content for which the children are unprepared. (Romberg et al. 1974, 117)

Even with the push for more emphasis on formative assessment, the pressures of high-stakes testing have focused teachers on making their students “ready” for these summative tests. Although accountability is important and it is not a question of either formative or summative testing, strategic formative assessment allows for teachers to make the decisions needed for students to succeed on the summative assessments.

When the cook tastes the soup, it’s formative evaluation, and when the guest tastes the soup, it’s summative evaluation. (Stake 2004, 17)

This book is certainly not a cookbook filled with recipes, but a book that helps the cook (the teacher) to develop the processes of how to decide whether the soup tastes good (whether the students are learning the mathematics expected). All good chefs have basic recipes, remedies for potential disasters, alternate paths, and standards of acceptance and of excellence. This book helps teachers develop the analogous tools for helping children learn mathematics.

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—*Standards-Based and Responsive Evaluation* (Stake 2004, 17)

Jeane M. Joyner and Mari Muri are the master chefs of the classroom. They have been there, both as teachers and teacher leaders. Their practical wisdom, understanding of the complicated profession of teaching, and background in both formative and summative assessment pervades the book. They well understand how much change teachers can make and what type of change is important to them.

As you take this journey with Jeane and Mari, you will build on your own strengths. Take the risks that challenge you, make the children part of this journey, and decide how far you will go at first. Remain cognizant of the fact that the longer you go, the easier the journey will become. The journey will be rewarding, especially since your students will be with you.

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