

# Embedding Formative Assessment: Practical Techniques for K-12 Classrooms

**Zavádění formativního hodnocení:  
praktické techniky pro základní a střední školy**

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Wiliam, D., & Leahy, S. (2020). *Zavádění formativního hodnocení: praktické techniky pro základní a střední školy*. Třetí revidované vydání. Praha: Čtení pomáhá.

This book is the third revised edition of the original book “Embedding Formative Assessment: Practical Techniques for K-12 Classrooms” (Wiliam & Leahy) from 2015, which was translated and transformed into Czech environment. It is no secret that formative assessment is not widely used in the Czech Republic, despite the fact that previous research confirms that formative assessment leads to improved learning outcomes of students.

It is for these reasons that colleagues from “Edukační Laboratoř” and the project called “ctenipomaha.cz” decided to publish the 3rd edition of this book. The presented edition does not differ much from the first one, it can be mentioned, for example, the addition of an introductory word by the authors, which is more current and gives more emphasis on the use of formative assessment at schools.

The original book was written by Dylan Wiliam and Siobhán Leahy, who are leading experts in the field of formative assessment in the world. For instance, Dylan Wiliam has successfully realized and implemented formative assessment in thousands of schools all over the world, such as the UK, Canada, the US, Australia or Sweden (Birenbaum et al, 2015). Besides of his many publications on formative assessment, he is also known for a two-part BBC series, "The Classroom Experiment," where he educates teachers of one British middle school about formative assessment and puts it into practice, whilst implementing various strategies to achieve a perfect environment for formative assessment to work.

"Embedding Formative Assessment" is a book that introduces formative assessment in an actual classroom and aims for successful delivering and implementation of formative assessment in 246 pages. This book draws from previous books on formative assessment, such as "Assessment for Learning: Putting it into Practice" (Black et al, 2003); or "Inside the Black Box" (Wiliam & Black, 1998) – which was also one of Wiliam's first books on formative assessment.

In this book, the authors put theory into practice focusing especially on teachers and their students (pupils). However, the book primarily serves to teachers needs in educational environment. Their main goal in this very book is to implement strategies, methods, and techniques of formative assessment into educational process, based on their previous experience and publications. Suffice to say, this book serves as a mantra for teachers on how to implement formative assessment in classroom. Nonetheless, this publication does not derive only from their findings. The book presents a list of many studies that were conducted in the past showing that formative assessment can indeed improve student's learning, thus, making formative assessment a way forward.

This book stands mostly on five key strategies of formative assessment such as: clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success; engineering effective classroom discussions, activities and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning; providing feedback that moves learners forward; activating learners instructional resources for one another; and activating learners as the owners of their learning. On top of that, it offers over fifty practical techniques teachers can use to implement the strategies in classroom.

Each main chapter of the book begins with one of the strategies, where the strategy is introduced. The subchapters always focus on reasons behind the strategies, techniques and various surveys and forms that are used for teachers, but also for students. The authors work with many self-diagnostic questions in order for readers to reflect on themselves. The content of this book does not draw only from recommendations and advice provided by the authors, but it also draws from many case studies that are mentioned in the book, i. e. from scientific research. On the other hand, as the presented book is mostly based on practical tips and advice, it is lacking the general theory behind them. It can thus be presumed that the book is popular science based than just

science based. Although reader can always look up the theory and research presented in the book, the reality is that most of the research is quality based (case studies), thus in need of more reliability.

As for the graphic part, the book seems rather chaotic on the first glance. It is based on white, black and blue colors which might not make sense at the beginning. However, after reading a few pages, the reason behind this gets clear. The blue color means extra advice, tips, questions and names of the chapters. The remaining content is in the black color. The cover of the book seems tempting, one of the reasons for that is an actual photo of pupils and teachers in classroom which is also the only photo presented in the whole book. There are no pictures or illustrations in the book, except for various charts and forms, so it might be difficult for the reader to get personally involved in the subject. The text, however, is very legible and well structured, making it "easy on the eye," thus, very pleasurable to read.

To sum it up, this book is excellently written along with the numerous studies that show formative assessment can really work should it be implemented in the right way, following the strategies mentioned. However, it might be difficult for the reader to orient in the text. The book's aim is to re-orient teachers to formative assessment, as, according to this book, seems as the only right way. It is up to readers to decide whether to accept this revolutionary way of teaching as their own, or just to add a little bit of an inspiration to their current teaching approaches. Therefore, this book is highly recommended for teachers who aim to teach in modern ways.

As the subject of formative assessment is becoming wider and more recognizable in the field of education, the reviewer appreciates the number of practical ways about developing and implementing formative assessment in the classroom. On the other hand, the reviewer is also mildly skeptical about the reliability of conducted research mentioned in the book. The added value of this book is definitely seen in knowledge, experience, and skills of the authors. However, the publication creates a sort of an illusion that formative assessment is the only right way to educate and evaluate, of which it might be presumed many other authors and educators would argue.

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