

# SAAL Continua: Peer Feedback and Self-Assessment

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## Collaborative Inquiry

The SAAL project is a partnership among the WestEd team, teachers, and school leaders. Building on the knowledge and skills you have developed in formative assessment through the Formative Assessment Insights (FAI) Course, our primary goal is to learn together about what it takes to be on the leading edge of practice with respect to student agency in learning and assessment. During FAI, you touched on student agency in Module 5, but now we want to push on the edge of your practice. While we will provide tools and support for you, we want to explore with you the factors and the conditions that enable your students to become increasingly active agents in their own learning. To engage in this inquiry, we will want to reflect with you along the way, listen to your insights, and record your thoughts.

The insights we gain through this project will not only be important for us, but also for a wider community that is anxious to learn from what we do and what we discover.

## Student Agency in Learning and Assessment

A primary goal in formative assessment is to promote students' agency in their learning. Being active agents in learning and assessment is important for students' self-regulation abilities. Self-regulated learners:

- set academic and personal goals;
- make plans to accomplish the goals;
- monitor their learning processes; and
- self-direct their actions to achieve the goals.<sup>1</sup>

Research is clear that students learn best when they self-regulate. And self-regulation is an important life-long skill to support success in both college and the work place.

During this project we focus specifically on two constructs associated with student agency and students' self-regulation abilities: self-assessment and peer feedback. We have developed two continua for this project to help you gauge where your students are with their understanding and skills in self-assessment and peer feedback. Using these continua will provide guidance for you and others in your team to analyze current practice and to plan for next steps during your Video Study Groups.

## Continuum I: Peer Feedback

In peer feedback, the focus is on interactive sharing of information between peers about how learning is progressing. Peers provide feedback related to Success Criteria that is intended to help one another reflect on their own learning and determine next steps for themselves. In this way, peer feedback assists students to engage in a cyclical process of determining next steps (goals), planning how they will reach those goals, monitoring implementation of their plan, and receiving feedback about progress.

## Supporting Students to Give Peer Feedback

The dimensions of the continuum primarily address student behaviors so that you can identify where your students are and make plans to move them to another level of the continuum. However, students' ability to provide feedback to peers needs to be developed over time through teacher modeling, explicit teaching, and reflection. Teachers also need to put clear structures in place in the classroom to enable peer feedback. These structures range from how the classroom environment is organized

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<sup>1</sup>Allal, 2010; Hadwin, Järvelä, & Miller, 2011; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011

for peer interaction, to time allotted to give, receive, and use feedback, and to the teachers' role in deepening interactions between and among students as they are engaged in the peer feedback process. For this reason, some dimensions focus on how you, the teacher, support peer feedback.

## Organization

**Rows.** The rows of the continuum represent a series of four "pictures of practice." They build on each other to give a sense of how a particular dimension of peer feedback develops from beginning to more sophisticated applications. The continuum provides you and your team not only a shared vocabulary with which to observe and reflect on practice, but also a road map of what to expect as each student develops his/her skills.

You will use the continuum to answer the same three big questions you saw in the Feedback Loop of the *FAI* course.

- *Where am I now?*  
Which picture of practice most accurately depicts what is currently going on in my classroom?
- *Where am I going?*  
What will the next picture of practice look like as it plays out in my classroom?
- *Where to next?*  
What concrete steps can I take to begin to move my classroom towards the next picture of practice?

Row 1 (shaded in green) reflects a teacher dimension of peer feedback, and Rows 2, 3, and 4 of the continuum reflect the student dimensions. Each of the rows in the continuum is equally important, and one dimension should not privilege any other.

The continuum is organized as a table. Reading from left to right, it describes a novice or incomplete implementation of peer feedback to a more expert level of implementation. The continuum includes four dimensions that address distinct aspects of peer feedback: *structured occasions to provide peer feedback*, *the quality of peer feedback with respect to Learning Goals and Success Criteria*, *the quality of student feedback in offering learning support*, and *the structured occasions for students to use their peers' feedback*. The dimensions related to structured occasions refers to the provisions made by the teacher to support peer feedback, and the dimensions related to the quality of peer feedback address the nature of the feedback that peers provide to each other.

**Columns.** The columns represent the four levels of implementation for the continuum and capture how student peer feedback skills and teacher support from them evolve.

The following diagram shows how to read the four stages of the continuum.



### Professional Judgment

When using the continuum to reflect on your students’ skills and abilities with peer feedback and the context that you provide, the evidence may not match exactly to the description of one level but rather cut across two. In such instances, use professional judgment to select the level that is most representative of the observed practice.

### Classroom Culture

While this continuum does not include specific dimensions related to classroom culture as we discussed in the *FAI* course, this is a critical element for effective formative assessment implementation. The collaborative structures you provide for students, the expectation you establish for students listening carefully and respectfully to each other, and the model that you offer in your own feedback to students will all contribute to the quality of peer feedback in your classroom. In this way, there is a very strong relationship between classroom culture and effective implementation of peer feedback. During the SAAL modules, we will provide an opportunity for you to check-in with the elements of classroom culture using a survey tool, similar to the one used in the *FAI* course. Questions that arise about classroom culture may be part of your Video Study Group discussion.

### Dimension Descriptors

Before you use the continuum, it will be important to familiarize yourself with the different dimensions. The performance descriptors below provide information about the terms used in the continuum’s dimensions. Also, be sure you have completed Module 1, including the activity on scoring the video example provided with the continuum.

**Row 1. Structured Occasions:** The term “Structured Occasions” refers to the opportunities built into the lesson for students to reflect on the learning of their peers and to provide and use peer feedback. A *limited structured occasion*, for example, might be a simple direction for students to write a sentence about their peer’s learning, in a brief space of time, and provide it to their peer without discussion. A powerful structure would involve a more complex activity in which students review peers’ work in depth and are provided with sufficient time to offer extended feedback and engage in a discussion with each other about it.

**Row 2. References and support for the Learning Goals and Success Criteria:** The goal of peer feedback is for peers to assist each other in thinking about where they are with respect to the Learning Goals and Success Criteria and ways in which they can move forward. In the beginning levels, students might reference the goals in their feedback, but the actual feedback they provide does not help their peers think about what they might do to progress in their learning and meet the Success Criterion/Criteria. When students are more accomplished at providing peer feedback, they reference the goals and criteria specifically, and are able to provide a rationale for why the feedback will support further learning toward meeting the goal.

**Row 3. Feedback engages the peer's thinking:** Feedback from peers should ideally engage students' thinking, helping them to understand where or how they have been successful in their learning and to think about next steps for moving forward. The feedback should not be evaluative (i.e., giving a grade or a score or providing an evaluative comment), nor should the feedback specify a next step, for instance, by telling the peer exactly what to do, which may be the case as students are in the early stages of learning how to give feedback. This kind of feedback "*does all the thinking for the peer.*" When students are developing skills in providing peer feedback, they are able to prompt their peer's thinking by identifying areas to work on and/or providing a suggestion for their peer to consider. At the highest level of quality, students engage in discussions with each other about the feedback and think together about next steps in learning that the peer receiving the feedback could take.

**Row 4. Applying Feedback:** The purpose of giving students opportunities for peer feedback is so that they can use the feedback to advance their learning and/or improve their work. In addition to developing skills in giving peer feedback, students also need to know how to apply the feedback in their learning. At the beginning stages, students may not know how to apply the feedback, or they may just indicate that they either agree or disagree with it. When students are better able to use feedback, they consider the feedback and make a decision about whether to use it or not in relation to a specific piece of work. When students set a goal for next steps and make a plan to achieve the goal or to guide future learning, their self-regulatory skills are at an "extending" level.

## Peer Feedback Continuum

	<i>Beginning</i>	<i>Developing</i>	<i>Progressing</i>	<i>Extending</i>
<b>Structured Occasions</b>	Limited structured occasions to support students providing and using feedback.	Adequate structured occasions to support students providing OR using feedback.	Adequate structured occasions to support students providing AND using feedback.	Powerful structured occasions to support students providing and using feedback.
<b>Attention to Learning Goals and Success Criteria</b>	Student feedback makes some reference to the Learning Goal and/or Success Criteria but does not support the Learning Goal and/or reflect the Success Criteria.	Student feedback references the Learning Goal and Success Criteria but minimally supports the Learning Goal and the Success Criteria.	Student feedback clearly references and supports the Learning Goal and reflects the Success Criteria.	Students can justify the feedback they provide to peers (e.g., what evidence in your learning and/or work related to the Goals and Criteria; "I used to give you this feedback..."; and "why I think this feedback will strengthen and/or improve your learning and/or work").
<b>Engaging Thinking</b>	Student feedback is evaluative (i.e., summative in nature – a grade, an evaluative comment).  ----- OR -----  Student feedback does all the thinking for the peer (e.g., provides the solution or gives a specific direction to follow).	Student feedback does most of the thinking for the peer (e.g., provides a strong hint about the solution or prescribes a means for improvement).  ----- OR -----  Student feedback partially scaffolds a next step for the peer to take (e.g., an area to work on).	Student feedback scaffolds an appropriate next step for the peer to take (e.g., an area to work on, followed by a suggestion or a cue).	Students giving and receiving feedback engage in productive, reciprocal discussion about their descriptive feedback (e.g., asking clarifying questions, discussing how peer feedback relates to peer's own work, discussing suggestions for improvement/next steps).
<b>Applying Feedback</b>	Students agree or disagree with the evaluative feedback, without advancing thinking and/or improving work products.  ----- OR -----  Students apply or do not apply the feedback as directed, without engaging in any thinking about their work.	Students consider the feedback and make a decision about how to use the feedback (or not) to the specific piece of work without setting a goal for their next steps or broader learning.	Students use the feedback to focus on an area for improvement or a means to advance thinking and set a goal for next steps or broader learning.	Students apply the feedback with the purpose of advancing their thinking and/or improving their work products by setting a clear goal(s) for next steps in their current learning and making a plan to meet the goal or to direct future learning.

The shaded row focuses on teacher actions and the non-shaded rows focus on the students.

## Continuum II: Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a process by which students monitor their thinking and behavior while they are learning and identify strategies that they can employ to move their learning forward (McMillan & Hearn, 2008). Self-monitoring is a feature of self-regulation and is a necessary skill for self-assessment (Schunk, 2004). When students are monitoring how their learning is progressing as it occurs against specific performance criteria, they are able to make judgments about how well they are moving forward. This involves students in metacognitive thinking, bringing their learning to a conscious level. When students perceive a discrepancy between where they are and where they need to be, they can take corrective action. Monitoring learning, making judgments about progress, and taking corrective action when necessary is what self-assessment entails. Self-assessment is also essential to using feedback appropriately (Black & Wiliam, 1989; Sadler, 1989).

### Supporting Students to Engage in Self-Assessment

The dimensions of the continuum primarily address student behaviors so that you can identify where your students are and make plans to move them to another level of the continuum. However, students' ability to engage in self-assessment needs to be developed over time through teacher think-alouds related to Success Criteria and structured protocols to support metacognitive thinking, and of course, building in time for self-assessment during lessons. For this reason, dimensions of teacher practice are also included to help you gauge where you are in supporting self-assessment and what you might do next to advance students' skills. Because student self-assessment can also provide teachers with information to act on, this dimension is also included. The amount of structure and support students will need for self-assessment will vary according to students' age and experience.

### Organization

**Rows.** The rows of the continuum represent a series of four "pictures of practice." They build on each other to give a sense of how a particular dimension of self-assessment develops from beginning to more sophisticated applications. The continuum provides you and your team not only a shared vocabulary with which to observe and reflect on practice, but also a road map of what to expect as each students develop their skills.

You will use the continuum to answer the same three big questions you saw in the Feedback Loop of the *FAI* course.

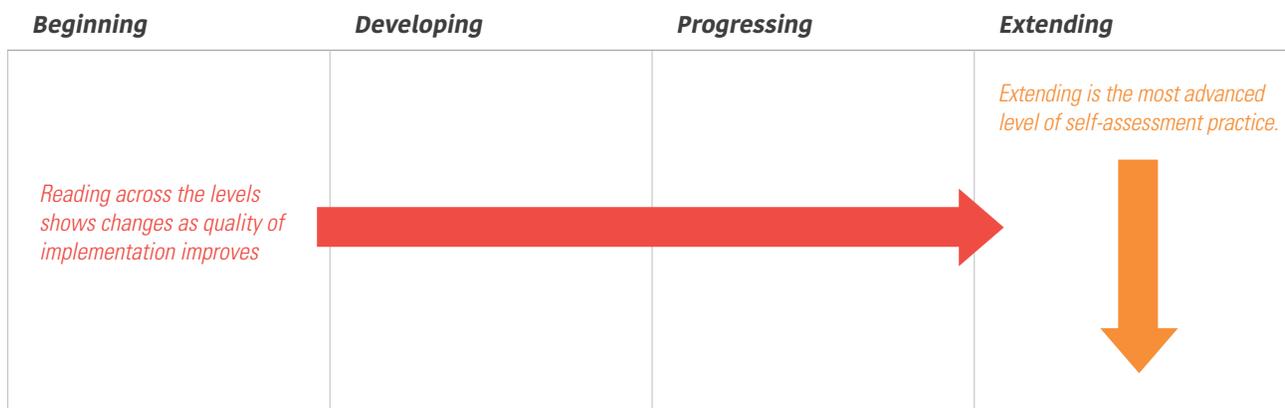
- *Where am I now?*  
Which picture of practice most accurately depicts what is currently going on in my classroom?
- *Where am I going?*  
What will the next picture of practice look like as it plays out in my classroom?
- *Where to next?*  
What concrete steps can I take to begin to move my classroom towards the next picture of practice?

Rows 1 and 4 (shaded in green) reflect teacher dimensions of self-assessment, and Rows 2 and 3 of the continuum reflect the student dimensions. Each of the rows in the continuum is equally important, and one dimension should not privilege any other.

The continuum is organized as a table. Reading from left to right, it describes a novice or incomplete implementation of self-assessment to a more expert level of implementation. The continuum includes four dimensions that address distinct aspects of self-assessment: *structures to support self-assessment, the depth of self-assessment, and students' attitude to self-assessment and the quality of information generated.*

**Columns.** The columns represent the four levels of implementation for the continuum and capture how student peer feedback skills and teacher support from them evolve:

The following diagram shows how to read the four stages of the continuum.



### Professional Judgment

When using the continuum to reflect on your students’ skills and abilities with self-assessment and the context that you provide, the evidence may not match exactly to the description of one level but rather cut across two. In such instances, use professional judgment to select the level that is most representative of the observed practice.

### Classroom Culture

While this continuum does not include specific dimensions related to classroom culture as we discussed in the *FAI* course, this is a critical element for effective formative assessment implementation. The collaborative structures you provide for students, the expectation you establish for students listening carefully and respectfully to each other, and the model that you offer in your own feedback to students will all contribute to the quality of peer feedback in your classroom. In this way, there is a very strong relationship between classroom culture and effective implementation of self-assessment. During the SAAL modules, we will provide an opportunity for you to check-in with the elements of classroom culture using a survey tool, similar to the one used in the *FAI* course. Observations related to classroom culture may be part of your Video Study Group discussion.

### Dimension Descriptors

Before you use the continuum, it will be important to familiarize yourself with the different dimensions. The performance descriptors below provide information about the terms used in the continuum’s dimensions. Also, be sure you have completed Module 2, including the activity on scoring the video example provided with the continuum.

**Row 1. Structured Occasions:** This row refers to the time, structures, and support that teachers provide for self-assessment. A *limited opportunity*, for example, might be when the teacher asks students to check their own quiz, whereas a *powerful opportunity* would be when the teacher provides a tool for self-assessment and engages in conversation with student about her self-assessment, discussing her judgment about pre-requisite knowledge, her current learning status, and what she intends to do next.

**Row 2. References the Learning Goal and Success Criteria:** The goal of self-assessment is for students to monitor their own learning with respect to the Learning Goal and Success Criteria and make judgments about their pre-requisite and current learning and ways in which they can move forward. In the beginning stage, students might not specifically reference pre-requisite learning or the current Learning Goals and Success Criteria and will remain at the stage of evaluating their learning without taking corrective action. For example, at a beginning level a teacher might ask students to provide thumbs up or thumbs down related to what they thought about their learning. An advance on this practice would be to use thumbs up or thumbs down as a springboard for a discussion on the reasons for the students' evaluation. When students are more accomplished at self-assessment, they reference the Learning Goal and Success Criteria specifically, and are able to plan and justify their next steps based on their own evaluation without teacher prompting.

**Row 3. Student Attitude:** This dimension addresses whether self- assessment is meaningful for the students. In other words, do they understand and value its purpose? The degree to which students seriously engage in the task will be reflected in the quality of the information generated. Gauging how seriously students take self-assessment can be observed while they engage in the opportunity, but a further way could be to talk to the student about the process.

**Row 4. Information for Teacher:** When students value the process, the possibility of useful information for both teacher and student being generated is increased. In contrast, when students do not meaningfully engage in self-assessment, it is likely that the teacher will have little or no information to inform next instructional steps.

## Self-Assessment Continuum

	<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Progressing</b>	<b>Extending</b>
<b>Structured Occasions</b>	Limited opportunity or lack of structure to support self-assessment. The focus is on superficial/trivial tasks and/or correctness or accuracy. There is little or no support for metacognitive thinking.	Adequate structures to support self-assessment, providing students with some support for metacognitive thinking (i.e., do I have the pre-requisite knowledge/understanding/skills to undertake this learning, where am I now, what do I need to do next to move forward?).	Adequate structures to support self-assessment, providing students with support for metacognitive thinking (i.e., do I have the pre-requisite knowledge/understanding/skills to undertake this learning, where am I now, what do I need to do next to move forward?).	Powerful opportunities provided for self-assessment that clearly engage students in metacognitive thinking (i.e., I have the pre-requisite knowledge/understanding/skills to undertake this learning, I recognize how far I have moved forward from the pre-requisites, I am clear what I need to do next to advance my learning and can take action).
<b>Attention to Learning Goals and Success Criteria</b>	Students engage in self-assessment at a superficial level (i.e., without reference to pre-requisite learning or current Learning Goal and Success Criteria) and are evaluative in their assessment (i.e., a grade, an evaluative comment).	With support, students reference pre-requisite learning and the current Learning Goal and Success Criteria in their self-assessment process and are able to think about next steps.	Students independently reference the Learning Goal and Success Criteria in self-assessment and are able to set goals for improvement based on their self-assessment <i>either</i> on their own <i>or</i> with teacher or peer support.	Students can justify their self-assessment and can independently set well-developed Goals likely to lead to improvement (e.g., here's the evidence in my learning/work related to the Goals and Criteria that I used to set goals for improving my learning/work).
<b>Student Attitude</b>	Students do not understand the purpose of self-assessment, and they do not take the process seriously; they have difficulty making an honest assessment of their learning/work.	Students have some understanding of the purpose of self-assessment and attempt to make a mostly honest assessment of their learning/work.	Students understand the purpose of self-assessment; they take the opportunities for self-assessment seriously, and are able to make an honest assessment of their learning/work.	Students take the opportunity for self-assessment seriously. They fully engage in, and clearly value, the process, which they regard as important to their own learning.
<b>Information for Teacher</b>	The teacher has little or no information from the student self-assessment to inform next instructional steps.	The teacher has some information from the student self-assessment to inform next instructional steps.	The teacher has sufficient information from the student self-assessment to meaningfully inform next instructional steps.	The teacher has sufficient information from the student self-assessment to encourage the student in taking the next steps in his/her learning.

The shaded rows focus on teacher actions and the non-shaded rows focus on the students.

## References

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