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Formative Assessment Plan and Rationale

 When planning for formative assessment in our first unit of Social Studies for 4th grade there are some things I need to keep in mind. First, we have four standards we have to cover, but within those standards there are six objectives to cover.

 Standard 4-1.1

1. Students explain the economic motivation for exploration, the political competition between Portugal, Spain and England and the impact on exploration.

Standard 4-1.2

1. Students summarize the motivations that caused the Vikings, Portuguese, Spanish, French, and English to explore the New World.
2. Students will compare the accomplishments of Leif Erikson, Christopher Columbus, John Cabot, Ferdinand Magellan, Hernando De Soto, Henry Hudson and Robert LaSalle

Standard 4-1.3

1. Students will interpret data from a map and compare the routes of various sea and land expeditions to the New World

Standard 4-1.4

1. Students will explain the effects that European plants, animals and disease had on the New World
2. Students will summarize the effect the New World products had on Europe

These are the main six objectives, in student friendly terms that the students are taught throughout the unit and will be tested on for the final assessment. Two situations influence my formative strategies, 1)Social Studies and Science are split from unit to unit, so I will teach a Social Studies unit for 2 weeks and then Science for 2 weeks 2) There is about 45 minutes allotted at the end of the day for instruction. We these two things in mind I have relatively little time to waste and after lunch/recess instruction can be very difficult. All of our information is presented to them in SMART board lessons that cover all of objectives the student must learn, except for Standard 4-1.2 which students will spend a couple of days researching using various methods (internet, encyclopedia, textbooks, etc) researching and then presenting on their explorer and country. I hope to teach this unit over 10 days, sometimes it takes longer, hoping to spend a day per student objective with the extra days going towards their explorer research project. Popham states that “formative assessment is a planned process in which assessment-elicited evidence of students ‘ status is used by teachers to adjust their ongoing instructional procedures” (Popham pg 270). Through looking at my unit I found three “building blocks”, according to Popham, that I will need to focus on to see and adjust if my student’s understand the material.

Formative Assessment 1

 Before I can even begin to start my unit on exploration the students need to be familiar with the vocabulary we will be using throughout the unit. I have identified 10 main words the students must know in order to be successful, all taking from the above objectives:

` *economic, political, exploration, motivation, New World, technological, expeditions, routes, European, disease*

During the first lesson we will go over each of these words as a class, talk about what they might mean, and then come to a class agreement on the meaning of the words. Students will write these down in their Social Studies notes journals. Since we don’t have much time I would expect the students to come in the next day and take a short 10 question matching quiz of the previous day’s vocabulary. “Adjustment triggers-that is to determine the level of the students performance that will dictate instructional adjustment.” (Popham 290) My adjustment trigger for this assessment would be 10/10=100%. For students who did not reach that goal of 100% I would adjust their morning work to come in each day and re-take the part of the quiz that they got incorrectly until they got a perfect score. I believe that understanding the vocabulary is very important to the understanding of the unit and will see those exact words on their end of the year test so it is very important that students understand them. If the student(s) or students still continue to struggle with the vocabulary then I would meet with the student and come up with other strategies for understanding the words (drawing a picture, find a book they know with the word, etc) in hopes they understand it better and finish the quiz. This would give my students more descriptive feedback on exactly what they need to know and understand, instead of just sending them home to say study harder. This is a level one formative assessment according to Popham.

Formative Assessment 2

 The second assessment the students would be graded under would be the explorer/country project. Students are expected to research an explorer and their country, create a poster with that information, and then present it to the class. Students are given the checklist grade before they start and are paired into groups (2 or 3 students per group) and given an explorer randomly. The objective learning expectation checklist includes

\_\_\_\_ Explorer Name

\_\_\_\_ Country he sailed for (not where he was born)

\_\_\_\_ What were his/his countries motivations for exploring

\_\_\_\_ Where did he explore

\_\_\_\_ Map his sea routes

\_\_\_\_ Well organized and neat poster

\_\_\_\_ Informational presentation to the class

During these couple of days the students spend their time on the internet, reading their textbooks, reading library books while I walk around and make sure they are on task and finding the correct information. It is very rare that students will get up and present wrong information to the class because they have to have the information approved by me. I find many of these adjustment triggers along the way as I teach. If many students are having trouble figuring out the motivations for exploring, then the next day we would talk about the motivations again and find examples of those motivations. These 3-4 days lend themselves to much more student friendly adjustment triggers since students are working in groups and I can adjust my focus to their individual needs. Plus the students are better able to explain to me what troubles they are having with the unit, so this starts to become a Level 3 building block where it becomes much more student oriented.

Formative Assessment 3

 The last formative assessment for this unit would be for Standards 4-1.4, which cover two student learning objectives. After going through the SMART board lessons, a pair of students is given a map of the New World and Europe. Students are asked to draw three items on the New World map that Europeans brought to them and a one sentence summary of how that affected the Native Americans. They are then asked to do the same for Europe and the goods the Native Americans gave to them. I would expect students to name 5/6 successful items and give a correct one-two sentence summary for each as my adjustment trigger. If students are unsuccessful at producing this then the next day I would focus my lesson on that again and have a more visual representation. I have seen teacher put two brown bags full of goods and exchange them and then have the kids act out the effect. That could be one way to adjust the activity and then have the students revisit their map and see if they could make any changes.

These will be my three formative assessments I would use in my unit to adjust my teaching and my students learning. All three of them would help me improve my instruction and get an understanding for my students learning for their objectives. All three also use a variety of ways to extract what my students know and what they still need to learn.

Readings:

Popham, W. J. (2011). Formative assessment. In *Classroom assessment: What teachers need to know* (6th ed.) (pp. 269‐306). Boston: Pearson.