E-Learn Best Practices Paper Proposal

Over the past several years, formative assessment has received increased attention from academic researchers. In 2005, Wininger and Norman summarized the extant literature on the topic and suggested that formative assessment has at least three key functions that bear on improving student achievement: (1) guiding and modifying instruction by providing feedback information to instructors; (2) providing feedback to students; and (3) enhancing student motivation. While much has been written about the feedback benefits of formative assessment, much less attention has been given to its motivational aspects.

The investigators have been actively using formative assessment in the form of on-line pre-tests in their college classrooms since 1999. They have learned from their own personal experiences that administering formative tests on-line has significant administrative advantage over paper and pencil in-class testing that can be time consuming and burdensome. In addition, the authors have recently completed a study over two years during which they used on-line formative assessment as an integral part of their upper division undergraduate business classes. Their initial findings indicate that formative assessment is indeed beneficial for student learning. Further analysis provides support for the “motivating” benefit of formative testing as opposed to feedback effects.

The focus on this paper will be to share the results of the authors’ research and personal experiences with formative assessment. Additionally, it will present a set of best practice guidelines that can be used to get the most benefit out of using formative assessment in the classroom with special attention given to its motivating potential.