Overview
As part of participating in the Closing the Gap Turning Data into Action Community of Practice, Boulder Valley School District developed examples of strong classroom formative assessment practice in the areas of self and peer assessment. These areas were chosen in keeping with project goals around identifying formative assessment practices that are particularly useful in closing achievement gaps and providing examples of best practice relative to formative assessment instructional strategies relative to the Council of Chief State School Officers (2008) FAST SCASS definition of the term: “Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students’ achievement of intended instructional outcomes.”

As an example of research to support selection of these areas, a cycle of reflective peer- and self-assessment was noted by White and Frederiksen (1998) as improving performance and closing gaps. As noted by Chappius in Seven Strategies for Assessment (2009, pg 97-98), students in the Reflective Assessment group "... were first introduced to a set of criteria for good scientific research at the beginning of the curriculum. Then at the end of each phase of the inquiry cycle in each module, students evaluated their work using the most relevant criteria. At the end of each module, they evaluated the work for all criteria. In Reflective Assessment classes, the gap between low- and high-achieving students' performance on research projects and inquiry tests was significantly narrower than it was in the control classes (p. 34). On a test of inquiry skills, the average for students in the Reflective Assessment classes was three times that of the control classes. An analysis of subscores reveals the greatest gains came from the most difficult aspects of the test (pp. 48-49)."
Within Boulder Valley School District, strong examples of self and peer assessment were sought out with assistance from principals, and videotaped. A high school language arts classroom was selected to illustrate peers providing feedback on a writing assignment. Mathematics and writing served as the areas videotaped in upper elementary school grade levels, showing use of writing rubrics scored by students and their teacher as well as use of self-assessment tools to track mathematics achievement over the course of a unit: a mathematics "passport" progress monitoring device and self-evaluations of areas of strength and weakness in performance on the unit test.

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