

## Excerpt

### from **The Number System: Formative Assessment Task Bank for Grades 6-8**

Cathy Carroll and Mardi Gale

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# The Number System

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT TASK BANK

Cathy Carroll

Mardi Gale

*Illustrated by*

Jennifer Mendenhall

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Students' words and drawings offer an incredible window into their ways of thinking. Their work is also a mirror for teachers. It reflects important information that helps us teach.

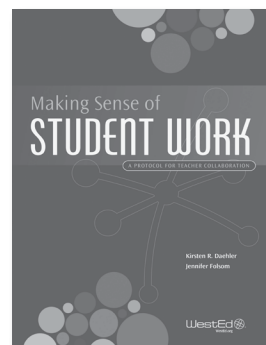
Formative assessment is an ongoing process that involves gathering and analyzing evidence of students' thinking, then using what is learned to inform instruction. Formative assessment is not simply giving a quiz or assignment to check on students' learning. It is also quite different from traditional end-of-unit tests, which often ask students to share facts, recall information, and explain concepts. Formative assessment focuses on shaping your instruction by building on the insights you gain by making sense of student work.

This collection of formative assessment tasks is specifically designed as a tool to allow students to share their thinking. These tasks:

- Go beyond facts or simple recall and encourage students to think
- Require students to decide what knowledge to apply when
- Can be solved in a number of ways
- Give students a chance to explain their thinking and ways of figuring things out
- Ask students to communicate in several modes (e.g., words and drawings)
- Are accessible and interesting

There are many ways to use these tasks to augment the instructional activities you already do. Try using them before introducing a topic to reveal students' incoming ideas or partway through a topic to monitor students' thinking and bring lingering misconceptions to the surface. These tasks are not intended for use as end-of-unit tests or final assessments, nor are they a complete curriculum.

These tasks are also ideal complements to our **Making Sense of Student Work** protocol — a guide that supports groups of teachers collaboratively analyzing and interpreting student work to inform their instruction. More information about this, our other teacher professional development work, and additional **Formative Assessment Task Banks** can be found at [www.WestEd.org/mssw](http://www.WestEd.org/mssw).



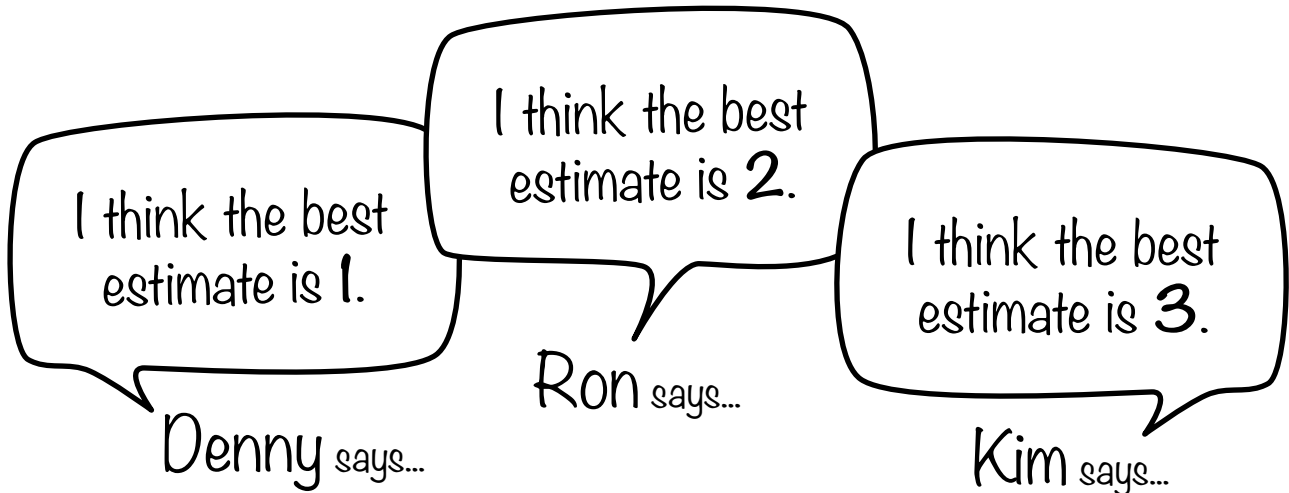
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TASK

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# THE NUMBER SYSTEM

Three students used mental math to estimate the sum of  $\frac{12}{13} + \frac{7}{8}$ . Then they discussed their thinking with each other.



Who do you think has the best estimate? Explain your thinking.

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