

How formative assessments drive instructional decision making in the classroom

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An Analysis of High School Mission Statements in Massachusetts from 2001 to 2019, research conducted by team from Boston College and Wesleyan University, found that 95 percent of Mass. high schools

altered or changed their mission statement during the timeframe. Examined in the context of local, state, and federal educational reform efforts, these results indicate that schools can fluidly add and expand new themes and competencies in response to community needs; however, the results also suggest that most schools had increased their scope and purpose without relinquishing any of their past objectives. The rare exception observed by the researchers was a 14-percent drop in school mission statements describing student's physical development.

"This study, the first to examine changes to school [mission](#) statements over time, provides tangible, empirical evidence that schools are expecting more of our students and our communities are expecting more from our schools," said study co-author Damian Bebell, assistant research professor at Boston College's Lynch School of Education and Human Development.

Wesleyan University's College of Education Studies Co-chair and study co-author Steven E. Stemler noted: "When school mission statements are systematically coded and analyzed, they reveal important differences in school priorities, reinforcing that today's high schools face considerable challenges in their effort to address an ever-increasing set of themes."

In 2019, the average high school exhibited 6.2 unique and different themes in their mission, a statistically significant increase from 5.1 themes in 2001. Common themes and objectives across school missions were categorized and analyzed to explore shifts and patterns in school purpose over the first decades of the 21st century.

Using a coding rubric that examined 12 of the most common mission statement themes, the researchers found the most prevalent themes in 2019 were students' emotional development (91 percent), cognitive development (86 percent), and civic development (67percent) across their random sample of 45 Massachusetts public high schools.

Additionally, the researchers saw an increase in career preparation, rising from 19 percent of [school](#) in 2001 to 38 percent in 2019. Another notable change during this 18-year period was schools' increased descriptions of their environment as challenging (38 percent in 2001 to 62 percent in 2019).

More information: [DOI: 10.30845/jesp.v7n2p1](https://doi.org/10.30845/jesp.v7n2p1) Dr. Whitney Perro et al. How Formative Assessments Drive Instructional Decision Making in the Classroom, *Journal of Education & Social Policy* (2020). [DOI: 10.30845/jesp.v7n1p1](https://doi.org/10.30845/jesp.v7n1p1)

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