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***Framing* the enactment of a Formative Assessment Lesson**

One of the things that we have learned from enacting the Shell Center’s Formative Assessment Lessons in classrooms across the country is the importance of giving students a clear idea both of what they can expect and what will be expected of them. We have coined the term *Framing* to refer to one of the steps that we recommend to ensure a successful enactment of *any* of these lessons.

Before asking students to complete the pre-lesson assessment, we strongly recommend that teachers begin by *Framing* the lesson. That is, begin by telling students what to expect over the next few days: Start with the pre-lesson assessment, describe the lesson briefly, and end with the post-lesson assessment. By framing the lesson teachers communicate a strong sense of purpose, clarify intentions and learning criteria, enable students to take responsibility for their own learning, and inform students when they will work collaboratively or individually.

Here is an example of what a teacher might say in order to frame the lessons:

We are about two-thirds of the way through our study of interpreting algebraic expressions, and today I am going to give you an assessment that is designed to reveal any difficulties that you have with this important topic. I will give you about 15 minutes to work on this assessment—I will ask you to work without help from me or other students. This assessment will allow you and me to see where you need more help, because it is designed to reveal any errors or misconceptions that are impeding your progress.

I will read your work tonight and give you feedback on it tomorrow. It would be very unfair of me to grade an assignment that was designed to reveal your difficulties with this mathematics. Instead, we are going to turn this into an opportunity for you to work on and resolve the issues that are holding you back.

Tomorrow you will have the opportunity to work collaboratively on a lesson that is specially designed to help you with the difficulties that you have with interpreting algebraic expressions. After the lesson I will give you another assessment—the post-lesson assessment—that will show what you have learned.