



ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

DIRECTION DE L'ÉDUCATION  
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**OECD/CERI International Conference**  
**“Improving Learning Through Formative Assessment”**  
**2 - 4 February 2005, OECD Headquarters, Paris**

Dear Ambassador,

I am writing to invite your country to participate in an international conference on “Improving Learning Through Formative Assessment”, which will be held at OECD Headquarters in Paris on 2 - 4 February, 2005. It will begin on the morning of Wednesday, 2 February and finish at lunch on Friday 4 February. A detailed programme, documentation (including the main publication), and practical information will be made available prior to the conference. The languages of the conference will be English and French.

The conference is the culmination of a major study which began in 2002 as the latest in the CERI “What Works” series. The study has been on formative assessment and teaching - regular assessments of students' understanding and progress in order to identify learning needs and difficulties, give feedback, and tailor teaching strategies - and has focused on initiatives at the lower secondary school level. It highlighted exemplary cases in schools in the eight systems (in Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Italy, Scotland, New Zealand and Queensland, Australia) that participated in the study, and has reviewed relevant research drawing on English, French, and German language literature. The main conclusion is that such initiatives can be very effective in raising student performance, improving the equity of student outcomes, and building students' “learning to learn” skills; it also concluded that there are important barriers to systematic implementation. The evidence and conclusions are presented in the final report “Improving Learning Through Formative Assessment: Cases, Policies, Research”, to be published by OECD prior to the conference.

The aims of the conference are to:

- Examine and share the main findings of this “What Works” study on formative assessment and related teaching strategies, and to extend the focus to practices and experiences in OECD countries as a whole; and,
- Bring together policymakers and officials, researchers, and school leaders and practitioners in order to consider the potential for implementing formative assessment on a wider basis and how this might be achieved.

The conference programme, to be circulated before the end of this year, will be designed around these twin aims, to allow the active exchange of all participants in plenary and workshop sessions.

Each country is invited to send up to four participants to the conference. (Countries which have participated directly in the study may send more participants). These delegates should be drawn from the following:



- Policy-makers/senior officials responsible for evaluation, school effectiveness, and improvement.
- Those with lead responsibilities for teacher training and professional development.
- Researchers prominent in the field of formative assessment and related teaching strategies; and,
- School leaders and practitioners involved in innovation and reform programmes specifically related to teaching and formative assessment.

Countries that did not participate in this study may wish to make available to the conference background information from their own country on relevant research and policies. If they do, they are invited to submit a short country note (2-3 pages) describing influential research and policies promoting the use of formative assessment.

The project leader on this "What Works" study is Janet Looney and the project assistant is Jennifer Cannon. Janet Looney will be happy to respond to questions regarding the Conference programme, the composition of delegations, or the voluntary country submission (tel.: +33 (0)1 45 24 91 71; fax: +33 (0)1 44 30 63 94; e-mail: [janet.looney@oecd.org](mailto:janet.looney@oecd.org)). On organisational and other matters, please contact Jennifer Cannon (tel.: +33 (0)1 45 24 92 18; e-mail: [jennifer.cannon@oecd.org](mailto:jennifer.cannon@oecd.org)).

Please send information regarding the names and full contact details of your national delegation as soon as possible, to Jennifer Cannon, to be received by **17 December 2004**.

Yours sincerely

Barry McGaw  
Director for Education

To: OECD Heads of Delegations  
Cc: Education Counsellors, Members of the CERI Governing Board and Observers