Assessment *as* Learning

Assessment as learning – part of formative assessment – involves students monitoring and gathering information about their own learning. They do this through self and/or peer-assessments to help understand how they are progressing in their learning, and what, if anything, they can do to improve.

As students gather evidence of their current learning, they compare it with pre-established success criteria to better understand their area(s) of strength, and what they can focus on to improve their learning.

Assessment as learning allows students to:

► develop personalized learning goals and an action plan for improvement,

► implement the action plan, and

► reflect on the results of it and how their learning was affected by their efforts.

Through the assessment as learning process, students understand more about themselves as learners and develop an awareness of their cognitive skills. By better understanding their own thinking and how it impacts their learning, students can become more engaged, motivated, and autonomous in their learning.

To maximize the benefits that assessment as learning can have on student learning achievement, it should occur throughout the learning process. This would provide students with an opportunity to practice this skill.

Knowing how to effectively implement and use the information from a self and/or peer-assessment is a learned skill – one that needs to be introduced and practiced like any other skill students are exposed to at school.

Simply having students periodically complete a self and/or peer-assessment will not yield the desired impacts on learning. Nor will it lead to any worthwhile experiences for students.

To best support student growth in learning, the information gathered through a self and/or peer-assessment should be received in a timely

manner and be actionable within the learning process. Therefore, facilitating a self and/or peer-assessment *only* at the end of the learning process would likely give little support to students and would have an insignificant impact on their learning.

Tips for Self-Assessment

When implementing self-assessments within the learning process, consider the following:

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Have clear success criteria available for students to use when considering their own learning. Success criteria should be written in student-friendly language. Without these criteria, students have no comparison points for their evidence of learning.

PROVIDE EXAMPLES

Provide examples (e.g., samples, exemplars) of what each level of success looks like.

GET TO KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

Some students might be considered *hard markers* – meaning they are very hard on themselves. Others might overestimate their performance. Ensure students compare their evidence of learning to the success criteria.

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FOCUS ON STRENGTHS

It is not uncommon for students to focus on a weakness or on what is missing from their demonstration of learning. Asking them to identify what they did well (or the strengths of what they demonstrated in their learning) will help to shift their mindset to look for positives. This shift can have a tremendous impact on their sense of efficacy and progress in learning. The language used in the success criteria should also reflect the use of strengths-based language (what they *can* do), instead of deficit-based language (what they *cannot* do).

ELIMINATE THREATS OR PENALTIES

When possible, eliminate any threats or penalties from the self-assessment experience, especially when it is intended to guide further action in learning. This could include the removal of any marks, scores, or other practices related to using the information for grading purposes. It will be difficult for students to be authentic in their self-assessment if it could negatively influence their academic standing. Instead, strongly consider using self-assessment throughout the learning process with the intention of having students understand area(s) of strength and area(s) to grow, and to practice developing these areas of their learning.

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Tips for Peer-Assessment

When implementing peer-assessments within the learning process, consider the following:

UNDERSTAND SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND HIERARCHIES

The relationships between students can serve or hinder the peer-assessment process. Asking students to assess their peers can be an intimidating task, especially if there is an established social hierarchy in the class. Likewise, having friends assess the learning of their peers can be an unproductive experience if it is not taken seriously – or a possibly dramatic one if students are not prepared to receive information from a peer.

Therefore, it is important to consider the readiness of each student – and the class – before engaging in peer-assessment. Because assessment is an experience that can influence emotions, it is very important to ensure that this approach is appropriate to use with the students in class.

KEEP IT ANONYMOUS

In some cases, it can be helpful to implement a peer-assessment where the student completing the assessment is unknown to the student being assessed. This approach could alleviate any potential social dynamic issues while still providing students with the opportunity to receive information on the current level of their learning from a peer source.

For more assessment resources, visit phecanada.ca

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