Segment 5 – Informed Professional Judgement

Narrator: Assessment for and as learning engages teachers and students in generating a continuous flow of assessment information. If teachers purposely plan learning tasks that align precisely with goals and criteria, then the information gained becomes valid evidence of the learning.

When the evidence is also triangulated - using multiple sources such as conversations, observations and products – it becomes more reliable.

Gathering valid and reliable evidence for assessment of learning informs and supports teacher professional judgement when determining a grade.

Music

Narrator: As assessment for learning makes learning explicit, promotes student autonomy and focuses on learning, students and teachers partner in informing and improving each other's learning?   .

Cindy: I've learned not to underestimate the students at all. They're, they're more than capable. When they're given the right opportunities, they're given the right tools, everything is modeled for them, they are more than capable of demonstrating their learning
but they have to be made aware of what that expectation is, what the learning is. When you really focus and emphasize on the assessment for learning to drive your instruction, that you know, engagement, accountability, ownership, those are all just natural by-products of involving the students and, and giving them a, a voice in the assessment for learning. I do exactly what I want my students to do. If I want them to be gathering a valid and reliable body of evidence, then I have to model what that evidence looks like. If I want them using success criteria to assess their learning, then I have to also be doing that with them. We are doing it side by side, we are collaborative partners, they have as much of a voice as I do. They know it as it happens. I don't have to worry about engagement or them taking ownership or accountability for their learning because they're, they're part of the process.

Narrator: Teachers and students have increased confidence in what is being learned, how to produce the evidence and how to assess progress in meeting the learning goals and curriculum expectations.

Cindy: an a-ha moment for me has certainly been on how vitally important it is to look further than just marks to determine a student's level of achievement. That, in there is so much that needs to go in to determining a level of achievement that it's more than just a series of marks that are averaged out and put on a report card. That doesn't speak enough to the degree of learning that goes into meeting an expectation. We're gathering observations, conversations and products however; it's more suited to the particular student's learning style.
What's important here is all about their most consistent level of achievement.

Narrator: Teachers deliberately and consciously decide to move away from a dependence on marks and software programs.

Student: It's different from other teachers because what we're doing with her, we're conferencing and we get to share our learning with her but some other teachers they gather evidence and they usually decide by themselves. You gather evidence and you get to choose and compare to your expectations and then you choose your evidence to make sure it shows that you have learned that. She showed us how to do it. She'll compare evidence and she'll show us how she did that so then, so we can follow and do the same.

Narrator: They prefer to rely upon precise assessment data about each student that is triangulated to inform and justify their decisions.

Student: It all comes down to your evidence, like the, what you have on your evidence because if I have a different opinion and she has a different opinion, but if the evidence is the same, then it's technically the same but it's just the way you read it then. At one point she gave us a whole block in the morning while she was doing other conferences. When she did her conferences, we had time to prepare everything, and then she gave us a paper with all the different expectations, a sentence of it and you'd make a strength and a next-step side and you'd put it all together to gather evidence. It's very easy to see where you are and she doesn't quite use grades, she uses the evidence and then it always has to come down to a grade, but she does much more before the grades so you can actually see your learning. That's what the conferences are for, so you can use your evidence to show her what you have done and you have a say then to determine whether you're an A, B or a C or D.

Narrator: They progressively cultivate a shared understanding of the student's most consistent performance using multiple sources of data, multiple pieces of evidence and multiple demonstrations of learning to inform and support their professional judgement.

Tristan: We bring an assessment up that we've completed and we can show her why we've completed this expectation. There's a whole bunch of different evidence that she can use like oral evidence, say you're talking to your peers or the teacher where you have a physical evidence. Any evidence that we feel that is relevant, that relates to the expectation that we think we've met it, we can bring to the table. She gathers evidence just like us and she has to bring proof that we're meeting the learning goal or the expectation. If I say I meet the learning goal and, and then she says she also, I also meet the learning goal that would give me more confidence. We're trying to agree on what the best evidence is. Trying to determine what my grade would be in the end. Most teachers would just sit down and do your report card, but in this case, we're, we're having our say, we have a say in it. We get, we get to determine our grade. If I have evidence that I'm meeting the expectation and she doesn't, then she explains to me why, why I didn't meet it or I did and I'm learning from that. I'm learning from my mistakes. We're learning how to gather evidence.

Narrator: Their common goal is to ensure a 'sufficiency of information" to be able to assign a grade that best represents the student's (most consistent) level of learning in an area under consideration.
(Smith, 2003)

Student: How do you only decide on one out of the whole year and all the different spaces of math, like geometry, decimals, place value?

Cindy: When we're looking at that body of evidence, what do we look for in that piece of evidence?

Student: The overall, you look for meeting the expectation.

Cindy: When we look at the piece of evidence, we look at the learning that went into that expectation, to find that mark that best reflects that learning.

Student: What we're doing right now seems fairly easy to comprehend and everything and it's really working for me and really showing how I'm doing my learning.

Cindy: We're going to be looking for the most, your most consistent level of achievement and how it's reflected in that whole body of, of evidence.

Student: How do you determine an overall grade in math?

Cindy: We're going to do that together. So every time we work on a cluster of expectation in a particular unit, it is to help us gather evidence so that you have a voice in putting that mark there. But that voice has to come from that body of evidence that we're going to continually gather. We'll be able to identify the strengths and we will be able to identify the next-steps. It's going to be specific to the cluster of expectations that we used to determine that learning, it's a reflection of your learning.

Narrator: Teacher's professional judgements are both reliable and informed. Professional decisions are rooted in their expert knowledge of the curriculum, their assessments of student's understanding of expectations, and the body of evidence that defines their most consistent, more recent level of achievement.

Principal: I've watched teachers struggle with allowing this new information to inform their practice. Reliance on a lot of quantitative data particularly tests, or assignments with marks felt very reliable to them. Qualitative data like observations and conversations which seem to be a little bit less tangible, although now we have a better understanding of how to capture what the reliability of that evidence through documentation, we're using video-taping for example now so instead of using what's in our head, we can, we can actually capture that qualitative stuff. I think they didn't trust for a long time, their professional judgment. They would believe the value that, that ended up on a, on a test before they trusted their own professional judgment. A teacher said to me, I gave my students a math test yesterday and the results of the test in a couple of cases didn't align with the, the qualitative data she had gathered. But the problem was, she hadn't really trusted the qualitative data so the observations that she had, that ongoing assessment that she had, she'd gathered, the conversations with the students, she knew how the student was performing with respect to this expectation, the test didn't show the same result. So my question to her was well why did you give the test. If you are working in tandem with your students, if you're transparent, if you've developed the criteria together, if you consider things like observations and conversations to be reliable data, then your professional judgment is reliable and valid also. It's more about taking what I know to be true about a student's performance and challenging the validity, the validity of certain tasks or sources of data that conflict with what I know to be true. We're seeing it already where students are able to challenge that too. Well, so here's this piece of evidence I have here today and it's showing this and I don't think that that's accurate because I also have this piece of evidence that's showing something different. And that has to do with professional judgment.

Narrator: Students and teachers know explicitly where they are day to day; what they have learned; and how their evidence to support their learning. Together, they can accurately and confidently assess and defend what they know and able to do.

Principal: To actually have students and teachers co-creating the learning together and co-determining a grade based on the evidence that they've collectively come to a common understanding around. To have that student voice in terms of students actually having a say in, in what evidence they think best exemplifies their learning and having a say in what they're final grade is going to be, makes me want to go back to being a student myself. I think the teachers play a critical role. Students don't just naturally come to the classroom with this. It's something that we've worked on over time, it's something that has to be modeled, it's something that has to be explicitly shown to students and shared with students, but, and it takes time. But, what we're coming to find is that you know the time invested in, in modeling this for students and allowing students to be part of this is, is well worth the investment we grossly undervalue what our students have to say. When there's a common understanding of the learning, and the students have a voice in that learning, the sky's the limit in terms of their learning, in terms of them rising to an expectation, in terms of them achieving. There's no surprise in what's going on in the classroom because you're actually a part of it and you're invested in how that unfolds and ultimately determining a grade in terms of student achievement. It's not professional judgment that comes from the gut. The key word for me there is informed in that teachers are using

opportunities to converse with their students. They're using opportunities to observe students in action in the learning. They're using opportunities to gather evidence and gather products and using that body of evidence again to make an informed judgment on student's learning.