

Segment 6 - Determining a Grade

Assessment for and as learning engages teachers and students in generating a continuous flow of assessment information.

If teachers purposely planning learning tasks that align precisely with goals and criteria, then the information gained becomes valid evidence of 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:

Evaluation is the process of judging the quality of student learning on the basis of established criteria and assigning a value to represent that quality. (Growing Success,2010)

Principal: We were very much, I would say marks driven right, so we, we would average it out and come up with a grade. Where I've seen a shift, that evidence is now used to drive instruction, the mark becomes irrelevant in the process. The tasks that are, are produced or given to the students are directly aligned with the expectations which are aligned with the learning goals and the criteria that's created, which is all co-constructed with the students so that there's a clear common understanding of the learning. That evidence is used together between teacher and student to determine a grade.

Narrator: Assessment for learning provides multiple opportunities to:

- build shared understanding of what is being learned;
- discuss the evidence together; and
- assess the evidence to come to agreement on overall achievement.

Tammy: I think we're at the point now where we've collected different pieces of evidence. We need to come to a common understanding of determining a grade.

Kelly: Some of the evidence, while it shows what she could do very well in some areas, she's understanding the expectations, and how to implement that, how to write the coordinates. But one little section where she was struggling just to touch was just explaining how three rectangles can be similar. That that's not enough evidence to score her any lower than a 4 plus. Because consistently throughout the whole unit, she has scored either a 4 or a 4 plus.

Narrator: In their analysis, teachers; choose evidence that best demonstrates what they know and do.

Cindy: What is that expectation requiring her to be able to know and do?

Kelly: Determine through investigation the relationships among area, perimeter, corresponding side lengths and corresponding angles of similar shapes.

Cindy: What evidence do you have that demonstrates that learning?

Kelly: She's able to explain here why she knows they're similar, explaining why she uses angle bisector and she can determine the permanent area for all 3 rectangles.

Suzanne: Do you have all the evidence that you need to determine a grade?

Kelly: I feel as though I do for the other expectations, it's just this one. I would like more evidence.

Narrator: Use multiple sources of evidence from conversations, observations and products;

Kelly: Throughout this cycle of learning, this student has consistently performed at a level 4 to a high level 4. I'm asking myself does my assessment for learning support everything that I have for my assessment of learning.

Cindy: So do you think that you have enough in your assessment for learning to clearly see if she can draw those conclusions?

Kelly: Considering that in other sections where she's had to give thorough explanations, she's been able to consistently do that.

Narrator: Gather additional evidence if there is doubt or inconsistencies in the evidence;

Suzanne: You really have 2 options. You can look at your assessment for learning to see if the evidence is there or you can go back and have a conference with her.

Tammy: I think you want to find out exactly why that one mark isn't matching what the others like, why is that one mark an outlier.

Narrator: And look for and rely on patterns of consistency in the evidence.

Cindy: So if your evidence shows that she has met that expectation, then it's no longer assessment for learning, it's assessment of learning. You have the evidence that supports the learning that is required in that expectation. It happened at one point during the learning cycle.

Tammy: You don't want it just to be one instance.

Kelly: That it happens consistently as opposed to just one time.

Tammy: So what we're really getting at is the most consistent level of achievement, her most consistent performance and how we're going to determine a grade from that consistency.

Kelly: If I take a look at how she was able to do for plotting points and applying translation vectors. She's able to bring her evidence as well. I'm much more confident in agreeing that her level is consistently a level 4.

Suzanne: Did you conference with the student regarding her work?

Kelly: I did. I conferenced about all of these expectations. I have one outlier where I'd still like to sit and conference with her before I make my final judgment on her most consistent level of, of achievement.

Suzanne: I have collected with my student a body of evidence that demonstrates his learning for that expectation.

Narrator: Students actively partner with their teachers in collecting and interpreting the evidence: Students and teachers share their evidence through student conferencing.

Suzanne: When we sat down to conference with him about his work, we both determined that the body of evidence that we have collected is consistently demonstrating that level 3. He was able to identify but he wasn't able to fully explain, so when we conferenced, we talked about what his next step would be.

Cindy: How are your observations and your conversations and the products that you've gathered speaking to the level of achievement that the two of you have decided on?

Suzanne: When I'm looking at my observations where I've noticed even his peer-to-peer conferences, where he's had difficulty was to be able to fully explain.

Narrator: They use conversations and observations to build a shared understanding.

Suzanne: So my observations and my conversations were actually demonstrating the level 3 as well.

Kelly: You've been able to have an observation of how he confers with his peers and because he's had conferences with you both orally and then he's also been able to submit a written product and you're seeing it consistently show up.

Narrator: Students choose their best evidence.

Tammy: With the choice like if he knows his learning style and he knows that he's better to articulate and have the conversation with you and explain it rather than the written form. I think him providing you with the explanation verbally is going to give you better evidence of what he actually knows. His most consistent performance or where his strength is to demonstrate his learning was verbally.

Suzanne: My gathering of my observations and conversations with him as my assessment of learning as well, to help me determine a grade.

Kelly: Multiple opportunities to demonstrate as opposed to just one.

Narrator: When students are authentically engaged in classroom assessment, teachers differentiate assessment as well as instruction.

Cindy: I have this one particular student that I struggled with throughout this learning cycle. He was trying to gather a body of evidence. He gathered his and I gathered mine and we had our conference. He didn't have that oral ability that gave him the strength or the, needed to clearly articulate his learning. His products did however.

Narrator: Differentiating on student's needs impacts on how they learn and how they demonstrate their learning.

Cindy: When I did capture a conversation, they didn't clearly articulate the learning. In those products I saw consistent pattern that he was able to meet the different expectations.

Tammy: So was he able to choose the pieces of evidence to show you?

Cindy: We looked at, at the conversations that he was having with his peers. It was hard to find the learning. But when we looked at a product, the learning was there, consistently.

Narrator: Differentiating helps teachers to appropriately triangulate the right sources of evidence.

Tammy: When you're triangulating, it's not an equal three-way right, like it's not 33%, 33%, 33% some kids are going to be heavier in different areas. When you're, you're triangulating the data, you're really emphasizing the point of the product and where his strength is to demonstrate his learning.

Cindy: This particular student, after our conference actually said, could, can I have the assessment so that I can show you on paper that you know, I can clearly meet those expectations.

Kelly: He's able to articulate that that's his preferred method to demonstrate to you what he is able to actually, what he knows and what he's able to do.

Cindy: I'm trying to emphasize that they gather a large enough body of evidence that speaks to their learning. I want conversations, I want observations, I want products. At that point if, if we restrict them to any one of those then that will have an effect on the evidence they bring to the table. It will be the evidence that best matches their learning style.

Kelly: Was he able to find a most consistent pattern in his learning?

Cindy: He brought me his body of evidence. I had my body of evidence. We compared the two bodies of evidence. We both left that that conference questioning that level of achievement and that's why he had asked me, I would like that assessment so that I'm able to see my learning.

Tammy: You're having that conference so you knew that that wasn't his most consistent level.

Cindy: He's going to need those three and it seemed like we were dealing with outliers but in fact it wasn't an outlier.

Suzanne: I think that's a key-learning piece here because we don't simply use one conversation to determine a grade. It's about a body of evidence and he was clearly able to articulate to you in product that he has met that expectation.

Kelly: Could you even take the definition for conversation further and perhaps his is a written conversation as opposed to an oral one.

Narrator: Differentiating assesses what they actually learned.

Cindy: He labeled all of the expectations to demonstrate, I've met this expectation... So most consistent, my, my most consistent pattern now is I'm meeting my expectations.

Kelly: Are you saying now Cindy that this student's most consistent level of achievement is a level 3?

Cindy: Absolutely.

Kelly: Does he feel the same way?

Cindy: Absolutely. He can clearly see that his most consistent pattern of achievement, level of achievement is in fact a level 3.

Narrator: Assessment for learning transforms the roles of teachers and students. It gives them confidence in the evidence;

Tammy: I'm much more confident in being able to tell the students what their achievement level is, I think in year's past, I might have got caught up in averaging out marks. Where now, it's not about the grade, it's about their learning. Can they provide examples, you know, using the specific expectations.

Narrator: It provides precise information about what is learned.

Cindy: A simple mark can't, can't speak to the degree of learning that went into meeting that overall. Like one mark doesn't say enough. I am way more confident in speaking to what they know and what they can do.

Suzanne: I used to rely more on products. Now I'm more confident in the body of evidence that I'm gathering and using conversations and observations to, to determine a grade. And more confident when speaking to the students. I have bodies of evidence that is actually demonstrating that they've learned that specific or the overall expectations.

Narrator: It compels students to act as learning resources for one another.

Tammy: The students are part of it so there's no surprise, they've been a partner in the process throughout.

Kelly: We used to accumulate a huge set of collection of data of marks and, and throw it in to our software program. It's so much more valuable when you can sit and have a conversation with the students.. Look what I've observed, look what you've gathered, look at what you've observed and that even from student to student, how they help each other and assess each other.

Suzanne: They're part of every piece of process of their learning from you know, looking at the expectation, creating a learning goal, creating success criteria, gathering evidence, body of evidence, determining a grade, like they're accountable every step of the way.

Narrator: And it obliges teachers to assist students becoming independent self-assessors.

Cindy: Where before they used to what's my mark, what's my mark, what's my mark, and now there's, now that they're able to see that most often the mark doesn't really show my learning, I want the feedback, I want to be able to demonstrate what I know and what I can do and I want to be able to do it. I rarely have a student ask me what is my mark, they get feedback, they get, you know, opportunities to demonstrate their learning.

Suzanne: They already know their level of achievement because of everything that you've done.

Cindy: The fact that we can hear our students speak to the expectation, the fact that they're using that language is, is what gives you the confidence in knowing.

Tammy: They're defending it and they're, they have ownership over it.

Principal: Having students have the say in their learning, have the students be part of the construction or deconstruction of an expectation or, or a task or learning goal, it's really shifted the role of the teacher from that person that's you know, giving the knowledge to being a genuine co-learner with their students. It's really giving students power and ownership in their learning. And at the end of the day, we are accountable to report evidence of student learning and having students a part of that, the role of the teacher is really going to shift. I think we're getting to a point that you're going to see students learning from students, you're going to see students self-assessing with students, you're going to see teachers facilitating learning, you may see students working on completely different things in a classroom and yet relate it to each other. This is a natural way of, of differentiating instruction that's, that's natural and that meets students where they're at.