Mrs. Chan's Story
Assessment Planning in a Secondary Classroom
(Grade 10 Applied)

Developing an Assessment Plan

Mrs. Chan considers the evidence she has gathered from different sources about her students’ diverse learning strengths and needs. Based on the evidence, she decides that in her next unit she will focus on improving her Grade 10 applied English students’ oral communication skills. Specifically, she sees they need practice in active listening and in choosing appropriate interpersonal speaking strategies.

Based on this information, Mrs. Chan begins creating her assessment plan using three guiding questions:

1. **What are students expected to learn?**
   a. What is the context? Why do the students need to learn this?
   b. What are the big ideas? What knowledge and skills will be useful for the students in the future?
   c. What are the overall expectations that will be assessed and evaluated?
   d. How can these curriculum expectations be expressed as student-friendly learning goals?

2. **How will students demonstrate their learning?**
   a. What valid and reliable evidence will need to be gathered to be able to evaluate students’ achievement of these expectations?
   b. Is the evidence triangulated and balanced across the four categories of knowledge and skills in the achievement chart?

3. **How will assessment and instruction be organized for learning?**
   a. What variety of assessment tasks will give students multiple opportunities to demonstrate the full range of their learning as they practice?
   b. What tasks, aligned with learning goals and success criteria, will create a variety of assessment for and as learning opportunities for students?
   c. How will learning be scaffolded and sequenced in daily lessons?
   d. What are the success criteria that will be co-constructed with the students? What does it look and sound like when students successfully achieve each learning goal?
   e. What evidence of learning will the students produce in daily lessons?
   f. What interventions and supports will be put in place to ensure student learning?
1. What are students expected to learn?  
From Curriculum Expectations to Learning Goals

Mrs. Chan knows that her students need to learn oral communication skills because these are foundational literacy skills that they will continue to use throughout their lives. She wants students to remember that using the appropriate interpersonal and active listening skills will help them to communicate with people more clearly long after they complete this section of the course, and so she identifies this concept as the big idea that will guide her assessment plan.

Next, Mrs. Chan consults the curriculum document to review the overall curriculum expectations and to make sure that they connect to her big idea. By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

1. **Listening to Understand**: listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes;
2. **Speaking to Communicate**: use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;
3. **Reflecting on Skills and Strategies**: reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations.

   - The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10; English, 2007 (revised)

Mrs. Chan’s next step is to write the expectations as student-friendly learning goals. Mrs. Chan realizes that these broad learning goals are quite complex, and so she returns to the specific expectations and uses them to create smaller, scaffolded learning goals which will make the learning more manageable for her students.

Once she has identified the learning goals, Mrs. Chan begins to develop success criteria for each learning goal so that she will know what successful learning looks like and sounds like. She plans to use these criteria to guide her when she co-constructs the success criteria with her students. Mrs. Chan knows that the experience of having developed the criteria first herself will help her to ask probing questions to uncover students’ thinking. In some cases she may use samples to help her students to think of criteria that they might not have considered. Together, Mrs. Chan and her students will continue to add to and revise the criteria as they work towards attaining the learning goals.
Mrs. Chan also identifies one of the six learning skills and work habits from *Growing Success* that she will focus on explicitly teaching and modeling during her instruction and assessment:

- **Collaboration:**
  - accepts various roles and an equitable share of work in a group;
  - responds positively to the ideas, opinions, values, and traditions of others;
  - builds healthy peer-to-peer relationships through personal and media-assisted interactions;
  - works with others to resolve conflicts and build consensus to achieve group goals;
  - shares information, resources, and expertise and promotes critical thinking to solve problems and make decisions.

> *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2010* (p. 11)

She chooses collaboration because she knows that her students will need to collaborate to demonstrate their oral communication skills in some of the tasks she will design. Mrs. Chan will record the evidence, use it to provide students with feedback on their demonstration of collaboration, and may use some of it to determine if a student will receive an E, G, S, or N for collaboration on his or her report card. Mrs. Chan knows that this evidence will not be included in the students’ percentage grades for the course.

### 2. How will students demonstrate their learning?

#### Planning to Gather Evidence of Learning

> “Evidence of student learning is collected over time from three different sources – *observations, conversations*, and *student products*. Using multiple sources of evidence increases the reliability and validity of the evaluation of student learning.” *(Growing Success, 2010)*

Once Mrs. Chan has identified the learning goals and success criteria for oral communication, and decided how she will co-construct them with her students, she starts to think about how students will demonstrate their learning. She plans with the end in mind by identifying the rich tasks she will use to evaluate student learning. Mrs. Chan decides on two tasks:

- **A performance task:** Students will demonstrate their active listening and interpersonal skills through role play.
- **A reflection:** Students will write a series of journal reflections identifying the characteristics of active listening and interpersonal skills, how they are using these skills successfully, how these skills have helped them in their communication with others, and how they might continue to improve these oral communication skills.
Now that Mrs. Chan has identified the tasks, she checks to confirm they are aligned with the learning goals and success criteria. She wants to be certain that what the students are learning and what they are doing is the same. Then Mrs. Chan turns to the achievement chart to ensure that these tasks would provide her with evidence that would be balanced across the four categories of the achievement chart in the curriculum document: Knowledge and Understanding, Thinking, Communication, and Application. Mrs. Chan could see how the tasks she has in mind would provide evidence of students’ Communication and Application of oral communication strategies and skills. She can also see how students’ Thinking skills and Knowledge and Understanding of oral communication would be evident in their role play as well as in their journal reflections.

Next, Mrs. Chan thinks about the sources of evidence of learning. She knows that her evidence will be more valid and reliable if it comes from a variety of sources. Mrs. Chan thinks about the evaluation tasks and wonders if she needs to add anything to them to be sure that students have been able to demonstrate their learning through conversations, observations, and products. The role plays will allow her to observe her students’ interpersonal and listening skills, and the journal reflections will provide her with evidence in the form of a product, but Mrs. Chan realizes that she hasn’t planned for evidence as a result of conversation. Mrs. Chan decides to add a conference with each student, based on both his or her performance in the role play and on his or her journal reflections, to her evaluation. She makes a note to herself to plan for opportunities to explicitly teach, model, and practice conferencing skills when she begins creating the rest of her assessment plan for her daily lessons.

Mrs. Chan also considers the tool she will use to evaluate the students’ work. In all three cases, she selects a rubric because it will allow the students to see her evaluation of their work using multiple criteria at each level. She will use the success criteria she will co-construct with her students to inform the rubrics, and she will give the students opportunities to practice applying both the success criteria and the rubric multiple times before evaluation. By involving her students in the process, Mrs. Chan will help to ensure that all of her students share a common understanding of how their demonstration of oral communication skills is being assessed and evaluated.
3. How will assessment and instruction be organized for learning?

Designing the Learning – Completing the Assessment Plan

Mrs. Chan continues to work backward as she designs the rest of her assessment plan. She starts by thinking about how she will plan her instruction to scaffold her students’ learning to help them be successful when it comes time to demonstrate their learning for evaluation. She identifies tasks that she will plan to allow students to demonstrate their learning. She thinks about how she will provide students with opportunities to practice using the success criteria to offer descriptive feedback to one another and to assess their own learning. Mrs. Chan wants to ensure that the students have multiple opportunities over time to demonstrate their learning and to improve before evaluation.

Mrs. Chan hasn’t forgotten about her focus on collaboration and so she includes opportunities to explicitly teach and to model collaboration throughout instruction. She treats collaboration like a curriculum expectation: she creates a student-friendly learning goal, co-constructs success criteria for collaboration with her students, provides opportunities for practice, for giving and receiving descriptive feedback, and for peer and self-assessment. By including collaboration in her assessment plan, Mrs. Chan ensures that she will help her students understand the importance of the learning skills and work habits and gather evidence of their demonstration of collaboration systematically throughout instruction.

Resources for Further Learning

From AER GAINS:

Planning Instruction with Instruction Video Series
Learning Goals and Success Criteria Video Series

From Research Literature:

