

Title of Session: Classroom Assessment

Moderator: Maryann Durland

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Room: Classroom Assessment Group

BJB2: Welcome, everyone, to today's Classroom Assessment discussion

BJB2: we usually start all the Tapped In discussions with introductions

BJB2: please tell Maryann where you are located and what you teach

BJB2: I'm a communications teacher in Pennsylvania

AvaA: my name is Ava and I am a pre-service teacher at the University of Houston , Texas

AlexisD: I am in Baltimore City and I taught HS English

FayeO: I am a middle school math teacher in Va.

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler. I'm one of the HelpDesk volunteers in Tapped In. I'm in New Jersey, near New York City

ChristopJ: So far the five of us

MaryannDu: lol

MaryannDu: I am an independent evaluator in Chicago. I specialize in matching research to practice, such as research and assessment

MaryannDu: Hi Shayne

MaryannDu: Shayne, can you tell us a little about where you are and what you teach?

ShayneTr: I teach art and computers to high-school students

MaryannDu: great

ShayneTr: oops, I'm in Toronto

MaryannDu: ok, so here we are in classroom assessment

ChristopJ: It's good to be here

MaryannDu: anyone have any pressing questions that they would like to ask?

MaryannDu: thanks Christopher

MaryannDu: ok, so

ChristopJ: well you suggested focusing our topic on learning

MaryannDu: how about learning

MaryannDu: great

ChristopJ: in a course I'm teaching to inservice mathematics teaching

AvaA: not really, but I was interested in what you said about formative assessment on your introduction

MaryannDu: ok

ChristopJ: the issue of "understanding" and how do we know when students actually "understand" something

ChristopJ: this was a long discussion we had...I'd be interested in hearing your views

MaryannDu: ok

AlexisD: I like Christopher's idea

ChristopJ: and perhaps even before that -- what is "understanding"?

MaryannDu: well, I think that understanding is what it is all about

ChristopJ: I still struggle with a good, clear definition

MaryannDu: yes

JeromeAM joined the room.

MaryannDu: and in many ways there is no one definition

BJB2: welcome, Jerome. We've just started

MaryannDu: hi Jerome

JeromeAM: hi

MaryannDu: I think that learning is a conversation that we have between the teacher and the learner to get to a place of similar conceptual alignment

MaryannDu: the "teacher" may be a book

MaryannDu: or a person

MaryannDu: etc.

ChristopJ: other students can be "teachers" as well

MaryannDu: but learning is the conversation

MaryannDu: yes

ChristopJ: and I think conversations can include writing, not just oral communication

FayeO: How do we know they understand the conversation?

MaryannDu: when we read a book on a hard subject, we try to figure out what the author means

MaryannDu: yes writing etc. also

AlexisD: obviously-such as we are doing

JeromeAM: I think we are all learners and we ourselves are open books

DavidWe agrees with Jerome

MaryannDu: we outline, we say what does that mean, we great graphics, etc. we try to make sense of something

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: we take what we know, and we try to fit things together.

ChristopJ: connect it to what we already know

MaryannDu: yes

AvaA: you can tell a person understands when they can build on the conversation and extrapolate

ShayneTr: And then we take the information and apply it, as Christopher says, connect it to other areas

MaryannDu: and if we don't know it we try to figure out why and keep searching

MaryannDu: yes.

ChristopJ: by asking questions

FayeO: good point Ava

MaryannDu: but

MaryannDu: we can also connect to misconceptions

MaryannDu: and keep going in the wrong directions

ChristopJ: we can learn from misconceptions, mistakes, error patterns

JeromeAM: yes the learning process has so many avenues

ChristopJ: if someone is there to guide us in the correct direction

MaryannDu: or we can keep building on our misconceptions

ChristopJ: which happens, esp. in math, for example

MaryannDu: yes

ChristopJ: where you learn a wrong "procedure" or "rule"

MaryannDu: and science

ChristopJ: and then continue to make the same mistakes

MaryannDu: yes

AvaA: that is why we need an on-going conversation

AlexisD: what I've found teaching in urban settings is that children are able to build on conversation and seem to understand but have trouble translating that into concrete writing...has anyone else seen this?

MaryannDu: we think we know, but we don't

MaryannDu: yes

ShayneTr: On the other hand, aren't many discoveries the result of going off in the wrong direction?

ChristopJ: (I have never really taught science, so I don't know from my own experience)

FayeO: It happens in science and social studies also

ChristopJ: good point Shayne

FayeO: I'm sure all subjects have their misconceptions

MaryannDu: and that could be due to several things, not knowing how to translate the thinking into a structure for writing - like knowing the whole but not the pieces

MaryannDu: yes.

AvaA: English Language Arts too

JeromeAM: I think that a big task for teachers is trying to produce Self-confident independent thinkers

MaryannDu: yes, going off in a new direction is not the same though as misconception

ChristopJ: speaking of new directions, I feel as if I missed so much from above since so much was said

MaryannDu: going off in a new direction is usually the result of not finding a fit, not making sense and trying to get that sense

AlexisD: right- but then how do you assess the topic? the idea is correct but the student is not translating it into a way the state standards deems as correct

MaryannDu: there will be a transcript

ChristopJ: thanks

MaryannDu: yes

FayeO: self-confident independent thinkers are difficult to create in our lower-ability classes

MaryannDu: I feel that this is the key to creating sc ind thinkers

MaryannDu: and it is hard

MaryannDu: but it can be done

ChristopJ: well I think too - look at how students aren't even able to "play" without having someone set everything up for them

AlexisD: I taught English and if the ideas aren't able to be translated into concrete writing students do not graduate

JeromeAM: yeah tell me about. It is a real challenge

ChristopJ: kids don't know how to go outside and play...I think this translates into the classroom where they need someone to hold their hands

MaryannDu: I think that is because we do too much for them, but we don't really let them do the thinking

ChristopJ: b/c so many kids have computers, videos, instant answers, so to speak

ShayneTr: And how do we assess the self-discovery and ability to think?

ChristopJ: certainly not with a mc test

ChristopJ: lol

MaryannDu: for example. assessment is about finding out what is known and not known

MaryannDu: asking questions,

AvaA: I think creating autonomous thinkers and learners is the goal for every teacher

MaryannDu: yes

ChristopJ: (that was a bit tongue in cheek)

MaryannDu: lol

JeromeAM: I agree Ava

ChristopJ: and there is a difference between formal and ongoing/informal assessment

MaryannDu: yes

ChristopJ: we assess our students every day

ChristopJ: even if we're not recording a score

MaryannDu: we should be assessing constantly

ChristopJ: simple observations of students are a starting point

MaryannDu: right there are different reasons for assessment and grades are onley one reason

ShayneTr: ... and not just academics, but emotional needs

ChristopJ: questioning techniques

MaryannDu: yes

AlexisD: of course but then don't we as teachers also have to cater to the mc test or the student may suffer when it comes to state mandated tests-- NCLB

JeromeAM: there is a gap between home and school that must be filled somehow

ChristopJ: good point Jerome

AlexisD: I agree about that gap but how can it be filled

AvaA: I think we need to devise a plan to scaffold our students learning

MaryannDu: testing is important, but if kids know something then taking the test is easier as they can think

ShayneTr: What are MC tests folks? I'm up in the frost north.

ChristopJ: multiple choice

ShayneTr: Thanks

JeromeAM: disciplinary problems in many schools are on the rampage

MaryannDu: rather than just know how to take a test

ChristopJ: well look at all of the test prep courses

ChristopJ: for SAT, just to name one test

MaryannDu: ok, so let's think about a lesson.

FayeO: hard to assess when students are not "behaving"

ChristopJ: ok

AlexisD: I agree but in NJ and MD if these kids don't pass high school assessments they do not get a diploma

ChristopJ: any specific kind of lesson?

JeromeAM: my point exactly Faye

MaryannDu: I think that kids are bored and because of that they misbehave, and they are not thinking so they misbehave

ChristopJ: i.e. subject?

AlexisD: I want them to think but I also want them to graduate- how do we balance

MaryannDu: right about the passing

AlexisD: in Nj- English and Math--- in MD Eng, math, science and gov't

JeromeAM: good question

AlexisD: other states have the same thing but I've only taught in those 2

ChristopJ: don't get Faye started about the Virginia SOL's

JeromeAM: lol

MaryannDu: so in a lesson you are teaching, you see two kids sleeping , one getting ready to cause trouble and the rest your not sure of. are they learning?

MaryannDu: what does this tell you about the learning in the class?

ChristopJ: well there could be many reasons why two are sleeping

MaryannDu: I read the kids and use this to tell me what I need to do.

ChristopJ: that has nothing to do with my teaching

MaryannDu: right.

ShayneTr: Sometimes - one kid is gifted and the wheels are turning faster than you can talk, others are left behind

MaryannDu: but I use that as an assessment

ChristopJ: I've never had a kid fall asleep b/c he was bored....rather b/c he was physically exhausted

ChristopJ: but, I agree about the others

AvaA: well, very little learning will take place until the classroom management is in place

ChristopJ: how do you know they are learning?

AlexisD: never had a kid sleep due to boredom---you're magical!

MaryannDu: let's say the kid is gifted. This kid needs more. So I work with him./her to build something that will get their attention

ChristopJ: in math, I would challenge them to solve the problem in another way

MaryannDu: some independent work, or work with one or two others

ChristopJ: or extend the problem for them

MaryannDu: I would do more

ChristopJ: or ask them to explain their method to another student

MaryannDu: if they are gifted, I would ask them what they want and most likely they will tell you

JeromeAM: when you are continuously asking questions or trying to share things they've discovered you know they are learning

ChristopJ: well, there again, define "gifted"

MaryannDu: I would think in terms of a week of work

ShayneTr: I let them choose their own path, but that makes assessment really difficult

MaryannDu: any one child who says I'm bored

MaryannDu: no not really

JeromeAM: how do you really assess a student who may be a special needs student/

MaryannDu: not if you are really structured and you have assessments in place. for example. in math I may have them do all the problems on pages, x,e,x and x. or I may

say, create something that shows me you understand this concept. a paper, a real life thing, a model

DebbieM joined the room.

ChristopJ: I would often have alternative assignments for the higher- level kids

DebbieM: Hi sorry I'm late

ShayneTr: I like the idea of telling them to create something that shows understanding of a concept!

FayeO: but some of my "gifted" workers are not good independent workers

MaryannDu: yes,

ChristopJ: good point, Faye

MaryannDu: I think that ability and independence may not always go hand in hand

ChristopJ: and it also depends on the activity

ChristopJ: if it's more of a "worksheet" kind of thing, they may be fine

MaryannDu: I believe that you have to be very structured in what you plan, but allow for creativity and thinking

ChristopJ: but if it's something where there's more freedom, they may not be able to work independently

MaryannDu: and have lots of options for when they are done.

ChristopJ: yes

MaryannDu: for example. I used to teach 4th grade. And at least 20 of the 30 kids (West Virginia) were good readers. 4-7 grade level

MaryannDu: but the basal reader was required and had to be graded

JeromeAM: I don't know if special needs students being included in the regular classroom is really helping them at all

MaryannDu: so I created packets of work. read, do, read with a partner, etc. based on the regular work

JeromeAM: maybe it helps build their self-esteem, but what about their skills

MaryannDu: then when they had finished, and taken tests, and had done other things with me assessment wise, then they could finish the book in a couple of months instead of the year

MaryannDu: I knew that I was addressing the skills in what I had them do and in the fact that I worked with them on a regular basis.

ChristopJ: well that's key - that individual connection with the students

FayeO: making sure that learning is occurring

MaryannDu: when the book was done, they were then free to read anything. but... I had lots of structure. book reports, skills, spelling words, writing assignments

MaryannDu: the only factor that was changed in this case was the time.

MaryannDu: these kids needed less time

ShayneTr: Don't you find that it takes too much time from other students. I find it so disruptive that it slows down the others.

MaryannDu: now I had time to work with the ones that needed more time

MaryannDu: no

MaryannDu: my classrooms could run without me.

MaryannDu: I had a bell. when I dinged the bell everyone froze

MaryannDu: immediately

MaryannDu: I said, too loud, or 10 minutes left, etc.

FayeO: you obviously do not have the same clientele that I teach!

ChristopJ: I wish I could use that with one of my fellow doctoral students

AlexisD: what grade was this?

ChristopJ: lol

AvaA: was this a group workshop

MaryannDu: I have taught in the worst schools in Louisiana

MaryannDu: and I am in Chicago public schools all the time.

MaryannDu: lol

FayeO: Are you allowed to use any curriculum?

ShayneTr: What do you do with the kids who don't seem to care if they do well or learn?

ChristopJ: I taught in Chicago for 4 years....but in a private school

MaryannDu: I have done this with 3, 4, 7th grade

ChristopJ: shayne that's tough - you have to find a way to make a connection with them

JeromeAM: Alabama Public School System

MaryannDu: no child doesn't care. they may act like they don't care. but no child truly does not care

MaryannDu: been in Alabama!

MaryannDu: 6 years in all

MaryannDu: not caring is a coping mechanism

JeromeAM: how was your experience here

AlexisD: I actually left Baltimore City schools b/c I wasn't sure what to do with them

AvaA: if you show them you care and that learning this important, most students will care

MaryannDu: our role is to provide learning that is so positive that they can care

ChristopJ: and depending on the age level, it could be a peer pressure thing

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: peers are huge

ChristopJ: esp. at middle school

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: but I believe that middle schools are perfect!!!!

ChristopJ: 7th boys, for example - not always cool to raise your hand

MaryannDu: they are like 2 year olds. all they know is the word no. they think that they are "big" people

JeromeAM: 7th grade girls can be a nightmare

ChristopJ: yup

MaryannDu: they hate you, but they demand unconditional love

DavidWe smiles

MaryannDu: you can't yell at them or they are crushed

JeromeAM: I agree Mary

AvaA: that sounds familiar

MaryannDu: they are just like a 2 year old in their growth patterns

AlexisD: I've found that in grades 9-12

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: so, I say just like a 2 year old, who will do what you say, if you don't argue you ignore the no. that's all they can say. but they will do what you want.

ChristopJ: I've never taught high school

AlexisD: but how do you harness them--- if they're out fighting, setting fires, and generally being criminally insane

MaryannDu: I have tutored high school and worked with teachers, but taught 7, 8, 9

ShayneTr: I have high-school girls. Teaching isn't just about the subject.

MaryannDu: lol

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: kids want to talk

JeromeAM: I'm teaching 6, 7, 8

MaryannDu: so we have to channel that energy into something they can learn from

AlexisD: right- but I don't have time to bond for a long period of time when they are years behind and I have to get them ready for graduation

MaryannDu: and allow them some talk time.

AvaA: I'm trying to integrate more technology projects to enthuse those 8th graders

MaryannDu: do you find that is working?

ShayneTr: My students are working on a wiki. I have to restrain myself from correcting the spelling. They are sharing notes from various classes, which I think is reinforcing their learning.

AvaA: well, it may be too early to tell, but they are all looking forward to making brochures in our next unit

FayeO: great idea

MaryannDu: It doesn't have to take a lot of time to assess the learning. and you don't always have to bond. I think caring and challenging are key

ChristopJ: that's good to hear, Shayne

MaryannDu: right, about the spelling. but I would at some point have a classroom conversation about how we present ourselves to others. what do we want others to remember about our work. how to we go from our first steps to something someone says is outstanding. and spelling will come up. no negative words, just that there is a process people use, called editing.

MaryannDu: that would be adding to their concept of what they are doing

JeromeAM: getting my students to realize that their education is vital to their success is really hard. they don't seem to care some of them

AvaA: what grade are you teaching?

JeromeAM: 6, 7, 8

ShayneTr: I'd like to throw out a practical assessment problem. I have a student in grade 12 art who has fine-motor control problems and writing problems. It was either art or physics and she came from a special ed school so I have her. When I grade her work, I look at effort, growth, ability to communicate intent and product. She complains about product marks because of her diagnosed problem. And her effort is minimal because she doesn't feel that she can produce.

AvaA: I love 6th graders

MaryannDu: well, some don't see much success for their future anyway. and that is hard. I have a school system I am working with on detention and they started showing movies about success which has turned around the kids. they see role models in movies about success and realize that it can happen. though it started with " that can't happen" and went to asking, can that happen?

ShayneTr: What movies?

FayeO: Explain that you will be grading her on her product and help encourage more effort??

MaryannDu: Shayne, that is tough for you both. I would talk to her about what she wants to learn, and get more specific on the assessment. effort is a minimal assessment bribe! but growth is huge. what does she want to learn. what is the best way to communicate her intent? the fine motor, should not distract her from learning. it is a way to produce something. but there are other ways.

AvaA: students often feel that they are successful when they are able to tutor others- maybe your student could create a book, guide, to help others

MaryannDu: great idea

MaryannDu: what are her strengths? communication skills, technology?

MaryannDu: movies that I can't remember right now!! but ones about success stories in schools and sports.

AlexisD: Akeelah and the Bee, Stand and Deliver

MaryannDu: thank you!

ShayneTr: I've had her two years and I'm REALLY trying to find some strengths. She had one creative idea where she took a material we had previously used and altered it for a second assignment. Boy did I praise her for thinking outside the box.

AlexisD: Dangerous Minds

DavidWe . o O ("The History Boys" - wonderful film teachers and students in England)

AvaA: "homeless to Harlem" was a great movie to inspire low performers

AlexisD: Boys of Baraka

MaryannDu: the art class is about techniques?

MaryannDu: thank you, thank you!!!

AlexisD: although they stopped that program in Balto

JeromeAM: haven't seen that one but I would love to

ShayneTr: Yes, I show them different media and techniques. She does the minimum

AlexisD: it's pretty good- some of the boys just graduated last year at the hs I taught at

MaryannDu: she also sounds like she does not own her learning. and she may also feel intimidated.

AvaA: please resist the temptation to ask less of her because she resists.

MaryannDu: no, I would ask more

MaryannDu: I would say that you need to know what she wants to learn in your class, that you are not seeing her as being comfortable, or really making an effort. and you want her to be successful, but she has to also be a part of the solution.

AvaA: Try to help her find some interests and then challenge her

MaryannDu: what would she like to be able to do? I would ask her, what do you think are your strengths? no yes or no questions

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: I would put it on her. with you as helping her to create a successful learning experience.

MaryannDu: maybe she should not do the actual products, but something else about them. maybe she would do case studies of the students creating their projects. why did you do it that way, that color. what are you trying to create or express.

ShayneTr: I think I will ask her what she wants to get out of the class. Thanks. I think she's just marking time right now.

AvaA: talk to her about the future. What career does she see herself pursuing'

MaryannDu: yes,

ChristopJ: that's a good point

JeromeAM: I agree

MaryannDu: you could get her in the studies, to ask people what does this medium feel like, do you like it, how hard is it to work with. etc. so that her experiences come from making sense of others experiences.

AvaA: that's a good idea

JeromeAM: it really is

MaryannDu: I think that you can find something that would appeal to her. but it does not have to be less.

MaryannDu: I think that would be so fun. but that is me!!!

ChristopJ: well I don't mean to be rude, but I need to get going in a minute or so

MaryannDu: do you think she might respond to something like that? you can still grade her on many of the same items.

MaryannDu: time does fly.

ShayneTr: First I tried to get her to write. Then I tried to get her to talk (not public speaking). She's really inarticulate. Sigh. She has a hard time sharing her opinions. The school has put her in charge of props (it is tiny and all the girls get a chance to be a leader at something) so I may try to take advantage of that in some way.

ShayneTr: Thanks for the ideas.

ChristopJ: thanks for the chat, everyone

ShayneTr: Bye

AlexisD: bye

MaryannDu: bye

MaryannDu: thanks

BJB2: Next Classroom Assessment discussion is March 8

AvaA: good luck everyone, bye

MaryannDu: I think that we have to help kids find that success

MaryannDu: great discussion. lots of good points

DebbieM: good night

MaryannDu: bye

BJB2 agrees and waves bye

ShayneTr: Thank you Maryann

MaryannDu: you're welcome. thanks for coming
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FayeO: Thank you for the discussion

AvaA: thanks

DavidWe: Thanks, Maryann. Good discussion