

Title of Session: Classroom Assessment

Moderator: Maryann Durland

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Room: Classroom Assessment Group

KathrynK joined the room.

BJB2: hi, Kathryn. Welcome! Are you here for the classroom assessment discussion?

KathrynK: Hi! I am, I just started my one year elementary ed. licensure program though, so I probably won't have a lot to add!

MaryannDu: Hi Kathryn

KathrynK: hi

MaryannDu: are you in a classroom?

KathrynK: yep- 5th grade gifted and talented classroom, every Wednesday & Thursday...4 weeks now :)

MaryannDu: how do you like it?

KathrynK: I was geared a little more toward the primary grades, but I am pleasantly surprised by the 5th graders

BJB2: Let's start with a tip for Kathryn...go to the Actions menu in the top right of the chat window and click on DETACH.

KathrynK: ah, thanks!

MaryannDu: 5th grade learners can be so much fun

BJB2: Kathryn, Maryann is the leader of this discussion...you have the pleasure of her undivided attention :-)) Maryann has so much great information to share.

KathrynK: Agreed...and funny with their attitudes!

MaryannDu: yes they are

MaryannDu: is this a pull out classroom?

KathrynK: well, the school has a GT program starting from first grade, so the students

have been tracked based on their test scores and all been in a GT classroom from the start.

KathrynK: I'm not sure that I agree with it, but that's how it works in the Denver Public Schools

MaryannDu: interesting

KathrynK: that's where I am

MaryannDu: ok

MaryannDu: I am in Chicago

KathrynK: I lived there for a few years....so fun!

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: I like it here

KathrynK: do you teach in the Chicago public school system>

KathrynK: ?

MaryannDu: are all students tracked?

KathrynK: this might be a dumb question, since I just used the term, but what does tracked mean in reference to all students?

MaryannDu: no, I am a program evaluator. I have an independent business and I evaluate programs like the national board certified teachers, or specific professional development programs

MaryannDu: and I have taught all the way up

MaryannDu: and I have a specific interest in assessment in the classroom

KathrynK: I see

KathrynK: you sound pretty experienced!

MaryannDu: tracked means that students are grouped by abilities (usually) and remain in a track through school

MaryannDu: lololol way too experienced!

KathrynK: gotcha...I think it is just the GT kids who are tracked....I know that the 5th graders that I am with all apply to middle schools...

MaryannDu: so the GT kids pretty much stay in the same group with few kids coming in or out a year - is what I would predict

KathrynK: kind of crazy

KathrynK: yes

MaryannDu: yes, crazy

KathrynK: and they are labeled young, they know of their label, as do the students who are not labeled "GT"I'm just not sure that it is the best system

MaryannDu: what would you think the range of abilities is in the school ? very low to very high? all avg to high? etc. no I believe that all kids need to be exposed to the types of programs that GT kids get

MaryannDu: I used to work in Denver and got my masters in Boulder

KathrynK: how funny! There is a great SPED dept. at the school I am at, and a decent number of ELL kids, so I'd say very low to very high...

MaryannDu: interesting.

KathrynK: yes, but the staff at the school has been great and really welcoming to the "interns" so, so far so good!

MaryannDu: I would wonder if the school covers one area and everything is here? or is this one school in a bigger district that has be designated for special programs?

JeffC joined the room.

KathrynK: I'm not sure about that one...

MaryannDu: I would bet on that

BJB2 waves hi to Jeff

JeffC waves

MaryannDu: hi Jeff

JeffC: Hi Maryann. I don't want to interrupt the flow of the discussion, but I have an interesting piece of information that came back from my son's middle school.

MaryannDu: share!

KathrynK: Hi Jeff, do tell!

MaryannDu: it will fit right in

JeffC: Well... they were listing out what the various grades were... and along the letter grade were comments I hadn't seen before.

JeffC: And rather than F = Failure (plain and simple) it was something along the lines of "Didn't try"

MaryannDu: ok

JeffC: Now... this brings up to me an interesting point.

MaryannDu: yes

JeffC: I think that many students may indeed try, and may indeed only score a 58%.

MaryannDu: yes

JeffC: Of course, when they're basically told that 58% = "doesn't even try" it seems to me that there's a disincentive for them to try again in the future.

JeffC: and that the message they get is counterproductive.

MaryannDu: yes, I agree

JeffC: ok... could you call my school district and tell them that?

MaryannDu: and the message is that learning is all the responsibility of the student~!

JeffC: because they never listen to me!

JeffC: exactly

KathrynK: Agreed....and F seems to be universally known for "failure", so it seems that "didn't try" should be given another designation

MaryannDu: I would love to!!!lolol

MaryannDu: I am working on an idea about auditing schools from the external view

JeffC: actually... I'm going to call my son's principal now... not about that... but my son

wants to start a Debate Club there and apparently I'm in charge.

MaryannDu: funnnn

JeffC: cool... I'll sit back and watch the discussion.

MaryannDu: that is a great starting point

MaryannDu: I believe grades tell me about the capacity of a school to engage in student learning

MaryannDu: not that I rule out trying, etc

MaryannDu: but combined with what we know of learning theory, and behavior, and how to structure learning environments and scaffold learning, and choose instructional activities, and align instruction to learning goals and both to assessment - it is not the student who got an f

KathrynK: well, this isn't really on that topic, but in one of my classes, we are reading "Understanding by Design" by Wiggins & McTighe about backward design in a classroom

MaryannDu: yes

MaryannDu: start with the objectives?

KathrynK: About starting the lesson plan by looking at the assessment and working backwards

MaryannDu: yes

KathrynK: yep...what are your thoughts on backward design?

KathrynK: I guess that you kind of just addressed that

MaryannDu: well, I think it is more that looking at the assessment. but yes that is the beginning point. I have a file on here somewhere that is a template for designing assessment items. I think that you look at the goal, and objective and design the lesson and assessment from that

MaryannDu: say the goal is divide by multiples of 10.

MaryannDu: and the obj says that students will be able to divide numbers up to thousands by multiples of ten.

MaryannDu: then I know that the assessment has to be constructed with problems that

have that parameter.

MaryannDu: but there is more. do learners know division well.

MaryannDu: should be a review - to catch anyone who does not.

MaryannDu: multiples - how well is that concept known

KathrynK: I see

MaryannDu: what makes this kind of problem different (if it really is< but pretending it might be)

MaryannDu: then really observing and seeing what students talk about when doing this, where do they have questions, where do I see some thinking going on.

KathrynK: yep...one key point in the book is transferability....if children cannot transfer most of the information/strategies that we are teaching to other situations, then they really aren't worth teaching

MaryannDu: yes, and what is transferable here.

MaryannDu: but also transferability has to be taught. that is a very high level thinking skills and you have to have deep knowledge to know what goes together and how to make accommodations across situations

MaryannDu: for example, as a dr. I don't know how deep to cut an arm based on knowing and having cut into a leg. but something is transferable, something about knowing tissue, layers of skins, and muscle. etc. but not right out transferring the skill

KathrynK: multiplication and division?

KathrynK: right....

MaryannDu: yes, making connections.

MaryannDu: that would be very good to talk about x and / and how what they know in one area helps with the other

MaryannDu: what do you think about the backward mapping?

KathrynK: I'll have to keep that in mind for when I actually get to start creating my own lesson plans!

MaryannDu: lol

MaryannDu: yes, to me a lesson plan is a white paper on the learning strategies, plans and assessments that will take place over a period of time. and it includes all the things to look for that may be a problem for students and how to fix them.

KathrynK: the book provides a lesson plan design template for using the backward design model....I think it is definitely worth thinking about and trying..although the standards & benchmarks are a huge part of it which goes back to teaching to the standardized tests.

KathrynK: which has to be done to a point, I guess, but that's another discussion :)

MaryannDu: so in the class above, maybe a few kids get stuck on multiples of ten. what do I do in that moment of teaching that addresses that. what I do is ask, what are you thinking? what is the biggest thing you don't get, and engage in a conversation that builds on the learners knowledge and what they are thinking

MaryannDu: well, the standards and benchmarks are only indicators that should be placed throughout the work, but they are not all that is important. just a very minimum part

MaryannDu: see, I believe that teaching is "brain surgery"

KathrynK: right...I'm nervous about how to give attention to those that need extra help, while not leaving the rest of the class bored

MaryannDu: and that it requires more about thinking and planning well, than about doing cute things!

MaryannDu: lol

KathrynK: yep....no activity based units

KathrynK: that's already drilled into my head :)

MaryannDu: well, that is where differentiated instruction comes in.

KathrynK: I'm only 5 weeks into the year long program...I have a lot to learn!

MaryannDu: do you mean you are not allowed to do an activity based unit?

KathrynK: no, but just that the activities need to have a purpose, not just arts & crafts, etc...

MaryannDu: right!

KathrynK: the example was a whole unit on apples and the children & parents got

REALLY into it, but there was really not much academic basis to any of the activities

KathrynK: and how much do you really need to learn about apples...

MaryannDu: well, I believe that teaching and learning is a conversation and that with students we create an environment that allows learning to occur at a very high levels

MaryannDu: lololol right!

MaryannDu: so I generally give all learning control to students.

MaryannDu: I set up a classroom so no one should depend on me.

MaryannDu: and I love great units of work that require lots of thinking!

KathrynK: how do you set up a classroom that way?

KathrynK: and does this work in 2nd, 3rd, etc?

MaryannDu: lots of planning. and willingness to really talk to kids.

MaryannDu: ok yes,

MaryannDu: my first class was 3rd

MaryannDu: and really involving kids in the purpose for the learning. and looking at the big picture with them. so maybe on a Monday, I would review the week. what we would be doing, and setting up any groups, or reviewing groups and their work, and making sure that we were all on the same page. as a team

KathrynK: so they always have things to work on if they finish lesson work more quickly than others, etc?

MaryannDu: talking about and having things ready for the week, and extra things for enrichment . I always liked doing math games, reading anything, and really fun, intense vocabulary building worksheets. or things like that.

MaryannDu: yes

KathrynK: again, I have so much to learn

MaryannDu: and I would plan out with the class when we would do things. like today, lets finish all the xzz from last week. and get those turned in and graded and then this afternoon lets review for the soc st test tomorrow.

KathrynK: ah, so it's almost like a class project for the day

MaryannDu: well to me it is like a big puzzle. I know that this week we will cover a chapter in spelling, this content in math, etc. and I put each thing in a box at the top of the page. and then there is a middle box that goes across the page, under all these little boxes and then I have a week divided up - kind of by day and sections

DianneA joined the room.

MaryannDu: hi Dianne

DianneA: Hi Maryann

MaryannDu: and then I begin to decide what learning activities are critical for everyone, and which ones some students can do alone, and which ones I have to teach to be able to do the learning.

MaryannDu: so now I am grouping. here are things that need to be done by Wed morning. and here is when we will get together to learn this. etc.

KathrynK: sounds organized :)

MaryannDu: so though I have given learners a part in this, I have thought it out and see the big picture and what fits together. for example, the English assignment on adjectives and extra voc work and math might go together,

MaryannDu: very organized

MaryannDu: but not by activity

MaryannDu: but by student control and learning goals

KathrynK: hmm....

KathrynK: I guess I'm not really seeing that in the classroom that I am in right now

MaryannDu: I also know about how long it will take to do that zzz work. and that if you have trouble, you meet with me. or that someone will start in class, but say I am going to have my mom help me with this at home, I think I know how to do it.

MaryannDu: lololol

MaryannDu: no I am sure you are not!!! lolol

MaryannDu: I haven't seen it for a long time!

MaryannDu: but it is there and it does exist

MaryannDu: and sure you have to push some kids.

MaryannDu: but now, you have the time to work one on one and see why this is hard for them

MaryannDu: and you have the freedom to adjust

BJB2: before we run out of time, may I make a comment, Maryann?

MaryannDu: yes

BJB2: Kathryn, as you can see, this was a wonderful opportunity for you to meet with a colleague and problem solve about assessment!

KathrynK: Yep, I appreciate all of the input!

BJB2: all the Tapped In discussions are designed to meet that need....so please let your fellow pre-service teachers know about what just took place....

MaryannDu: I think the biggest thing is to always be asking myself, what is going on in that learners head?

BJB2: and we'll be here when you finish the formal schooling and you need collegial support even more.

BJB2 is willing to give some of her learners to Maryann to take a look ;-)

MaryannDu: can I connect? can they explain it? form a question? that is what learning is all about

MaryannDu: lol would love to!

KathrynK: I will, definitely...we were actually all asked to sign up for one and see how it works- I'll report back and share my great experience!

MaryannDu: I love hearing what is happening to kids

MaryannDu: thank you. you brought a great exp for us to talk about!

MaryannDu: and branch off of

BJB2: The next Classroom Assessment is scheduled for October 11

MaryannDu: thank you BJ

KathrynK: You're welcome...thanks for all of your advice!! Thanks BJ. Have a great night!!!

BJB2: Thanks, Maryann...nice to have you back!

MaryannDu: great to be back!

BJB2 hugs and heads for Dianne's Teachers in Training discussion