The Assessor

Talking about Evidence

6 tips for effective collaboration with student-produced evidence

EBR'n with Art

Learn about their EBR journey!

What's New in Math and Science EBR?

The Four I's of Formative Instruction

Evidence-Based Grades and Your PLC Team

Doug Lillydahl
Communication Arts Division

Middle and high school teams across the country are diving into standards-based grading because they want conversations in their classrooms to circle around skills and improvement instead of "how many points do I need to get a B?"

Many teams at our school have based their skills conversations with students and their teammates on rubrics that take a particular skills target, call it mastery, and then describe what it looks like as a student (1) begins, (2)approaches, (3) meets, or (4) exceeds it. We have gained a consistency in our feedback and communication with students as a result, and have avoided assigning arbitrary point values to each cell of a rubric.

The trouble arises when, much like a currency conversion, some students and teachers see a designation of a "3 " or "4" on a 4 level rubric as converting to a certain value in a grade book. This is a natural part of our world, regardless of the grading system used in our classes. In the end, we know we will be converting dollars to pesos if we are going to Mexico – or rubric ratings to letter grades if we apply to college. The GPA is as entrenched as ever in college admissions. But, while it is easier to say with confidence across teams, "This is a 2," we are still struggling with the final "currency conversion" of that 2 -- and a PLC team needs to share such a basic understanding.

Do we align 4=A; 3=B, 2=C, and 1=D/F? On the surface, that might make sense, but then the 1 represents two grades. Shall we scrap the four point scale and swap in a five point scale? Or a 10 point scale? There have been some lively debates about how to meet this challenge, but my advice to teams is to take a step back, remember the purpose of our feedback, and proceed from there.

The four point scale is really meant to be a four category system to communicate to a student where they stand in respect to a Learning Target. You can master it (3), exceed expectations (4), be approaching expectations (2) or be still developing (1). In order to make sense of these designations, a student needs to develop an understanding of the target. Without that anchor, we are back at the days when I would look at some writing and say, "Feels like 7.5/10 for Development," and move on to the next column of the rubric.

So our feedback on the 4 point scale serves the target first, and grades second.

Let me reiterate that – we are not putting grade calculation first and student feedback second, but the reverse: progress toward the target drives the communication.

So, instead of a student left puzzling over how a 7.5/10 converts to their future learning, we have teachers puzzling over how a 3 converts to a letter grade. The challenge has been transferred from child to teacher… and while it is indeed a new challenge for us, I'm ok with that. We can figure this out.

Let's start with accepting that all the CCSS standards (the basis for our learning targets) are rigorous. If you can master those expectations, you are achieving a lot. In fact, if you can do that consistently with a grade level complexity of materials and task, that is excellent. I propose an A or A- conversion for a pattern of 3's.

If you can exceed that level, I am really impressed—I know that teachers struggle in my division to define how the standard can be exceeded. Words like "insightfully" and "creatively" begin to pop into the otherwise unchanged "mastery" target language. In some ways, it looks like we are grasping at straws to really define what exceeds, but again, I don't mind. We are describing a narrow band of achievement that is there to capture the imagination of the best and keep them reaching. If a student's work falls in that four category, I recommend an A+ with no questions asked.

Much of the worry I hear from

teachers is that the 2 or "developing" designation is so broad that a student can wander around in that vast space looking for the doorway to a 3 for an entire semester. So, how do we balance the need for clear messaging around the target (you have not mastered it yet—let's focus in on it), without discouraging students who aren't just developing (1) but have multiple rooms to visit in 2 before they earn the coveted mastery (3)?

The most successful teams and teachers I know have divvied up the two to provide students with more feedback and motivation within that band. Teachers are experimenting with the 2.5, the 2- or 2+, or simply, more commentary. Is that "cheating" by creating a de facto 5 or 6 point scale? In my mind, no. We are staying true to the anchor of the target in our communication, yet, we have recognized and adapted to the reality of that communication. Beyond the rating, the commentary feedback allows a student to know more about where to go next. This is essential to their learning.

As with any grading policy, converting that 2- or 2+ into a letter grade should be calibrated out with a team and consistently applied. Regardless of your team's method, the focus on the target and a little "common sense" adjustment for the realities of our world make the "grade conversion" less of a crisis and more of an opportunity for team professional learning.

Exploratory Dialogue:
How (and why?) are we grading?

What does a rubric "3" mean to us? To our students?

If you do everything your teacher asks (=meeting the targets) what grade should you get? An A? Does the EBR 3 reflect that more accurately?

Traditional	EBR -- three ways to look at it:		
A+ A = Excellent = 4 A-	A+ = Above=4	You have gone above and beyond	Really gets it.
	A = Mastery of CCSS standard = 3 A-	You have learned everything I have asked of you to the **rigorous CCSS** level I have asked.	Gets it.

A-
 	
B+
    = Good = 3
B
 	
B-
	B+
	
	B
	
	B-
	        = Approach=2
		To a varying extent, you have learned to the level I have asked.	Doesn't get it yet.

B-
 	
C+
   = Fair = 2
C
 	
C-
	C+
	
	C
	
	C-
	2+, 2-, 2.5 if used fall
	    within this space		

C- D = Poor =1 F	D = Fail =1 F	You have not learned effectively.	Really doesn't get it.

What's Common in Evidence-Based Grading?

Justin Fisk - World Languages Division

1. Common goals

In the case of our World Language classrooms, the three modes of communication that form the core of our standards now drive our teams' conversations. By adopting the central standards of our professional organization (ACTFL, in the case of World Languages), we're also far more aligned with what second language acquisition research calls "best practices." Importantly, we now all have the same learning outcomes for kids in mind as we've shifted from a curricular/assessment model that emphasized discrete skills and word sets to one that's instead predicated on communicative competencies. We haven't abandoned the supporting structures that serve as the building blocks of language, we've simply reprioritized what matters most.

2. Common language

One of the biggest benefits of our transition to EBR has been the resultant common understanding and common language that have accompanied our now-common goals. Not only do we now have great consensus and cohesion around what we want kids to gain from being in our classes, our teams literally use the same terms to describe students'

interaction with assessment and content in our courses. The capacity for greater articulation across teams and across programs has definitely been enhanced.

3. Common targets

Six common EBR learning targets across four of our languages (Chinese, French, German, and Spanish) means a lot of opportunities for articulation, both within and between our programs. Our ELL team has also enjoyed an entrée into EBR this year as our Beginning course has paired targets that emphasize English language development (ELD) with English language arts (ELA).

4. Common Assessments

Though we had already begun a move to a performance-based model of assessment before our wide-scale adoption of EBR, it was with our shift to EBR that we really started to see how transformative a process-based approach to assessment could be. Our teams' feedback sheets and dialogic co-constructive feedback process in which students use evidence from performance to gauge their own strengths and areas for growth represent a big shift in how

we approach assessment. Assessment is no longer viewed as a set-piece event, but rather as a fluid and dynamic process that involves students more intimately in their own learning.

5. Common Data and Common responses

I think we'd all agree that unless data serve as a call to action, there can be little inherent value. No longer are our teams mired in discussions around CRT data that resulted at their worst in superficial alterations to selected-response exams. With a common set of targets, a common set of expectations for learning, a common understanding of where our kids should be heading, and a grading and reporting process that is utterly transparent and linked to transcendent learning outcomes, our teams are beginning to do things with data that had never been imagined before. EBR has spurred plenty of innovations in the types of data we're analyzing, such as student-generated reflections in which students identify areas of strength and areas for growth. Admittedly, we're still in the process of building our capacity to make use of all this new information, but pivot tables have never been more exciting.

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The EBR Challenge

Wendy Custable
Applied Arts Divison

During the 2013-2014 school, after reading a formative assessment and standards-based grading book authored by Robert Marzano, one of our Family and Consumer Sciences teachers, Sara Lohrmann, challenged the Applied Arts teams to think differently about how they grade and report student learning. For years she was frustrated with the "traditional" approach of communicating how students were growing in the courses she taught. She did not feel that assigning points to projects and tests told students anything about the knowledge and skills they were learning, or more importantly, not learning. That year, Sara began to lead the division down a new path of grading and reporting called Standards-Based Grading.

Now four years later and a new name, I am proud to report that Evidenced Based Reporting (EBR) is being used as the method of providing feedback on student learning in 32 of the 40 courses we offer in the division, with all 40 scheduled to "be" EBR in the next couple years. More importantly, if you asked the teachers, not one of them would return to traditional grading and reporting practices. So, why do the Applied Arts teachers believe in EBR so much? When asked, they said the following:

- Our team conversations are more focused on student learning.
- It gives students the opportunity to grow. That first "thing" that I grade now does not have to haunt a student for the entire semester.
- It helps align our team's curriculum, assessment and instruction.
- Teachers and students can better track progress/growth.
- Students are more reflective.
- Students stop focusing on their grade and start focusing on their learning.
- EBR creates a more relaxed classroom environment because it removes some of the high stakes feeling of the grade. Students can actually learn from their mistakes.
- When students begin an EBR course, they are aware of what targets they will work towards mastering, rather than just assignments they will be completing.
- Once we were able to narrow down our learning targets, we "graded" less and our students reflected more.
- Rather than accumulating as many points as possible (or competing with each other over who has the highest percentage in the class) students brag about growing as an individual and mastering the targets.

Applied Arts teachers believe that evidence based reporting encourages a growth mindset in their students and within their teams.

With that said, the EBR path is not an easy one to travel. There are a lot of twists and turns and hills to climb. It can be exhausting. However, it was worth the time and effort. Not only do the Applied Arts teachers feel their curriculum, instruction, and assessments are better than they have ever been, their team conversations and data reflections are more meaningful and productive.

When asked what tips they would give to a team interested in converting their courses to EBR, the Applied Arts teachers reported that teams must:

- Have a growth mindset. Think Carol Dweck!
- Be willing and able to let go of pet projects, assignments, and assessments. It is hard to let go. However, if it does not provide evidence of student learning towards a learning target, then it does not need to be in the curriculum.
- Align (not lock-step) curriculum, instruction, and assessment with teammates. Your collaborative team conversations will be more rich and purposeful.
- Be willing to take risks and embrace mistakes.
- Trust team members and the process.
- Communicate triumphs and pitfalls with teammates so everyone can learn.
- Ask for and accept feedback from teammates and from students.

I am so proud to work in a division where the teachers and students focus their time and energy on learning the amazing knowledge and skills offered in the Applied Arts courses. The teacher teams worked extremely hard the past four years to make their vision of success for every student a reality. Therefore, I challenge all of those teams who feel that their current grading and reporting practices do not match their teaching and learning beliefs to begin to walk down the EBR path that Sara and many others paved for them.

Evidence-Based Grading and Wellness

Eric Ramos
Physical Welfare

In Physical Welfare, many of us are, or have been, Coaches, Club Sponsors, and Athletic Trainers. We spend a lot of our time with students outside of the structured environment of the classroom, mentoring and getting to know kids on a more personal level. We have always focused our professional discussions around these personal relationships, as our subject matter (physical fitness, nutrition, mental illness, saving lives, learning to trust) often is of a more personal nature. What we have found is that Evidence Based Reporting is all about the PERSONAL conversation between the student and the teacher, which has made it a natural fit with our content.

The creation of assessments, the gathering of evidence, the conversations around learning, and the day to day instruction all look and sound now very personal. As Director, I felt the shift when I started in my new role and heard it, teachers began talking about various evidence that was being gathered, and what this might mean about student learning. My perception was verified when a teacher, who was returning from taking some time off, proclaimed "everyone is talking differently now."

Assessments have become focused on putting students in a position to show what they know, how they can use this new knowledge, and how we can capture that as evidence, as opposed to simply what they have memorized.

This new type of assessment required us to rewrite our targets and refocus our instruction around the student experience. Conversations around the assessment of our students entered a never-ending cycle of check the targets, create the assessment, give the assessment, have team discussions around the evidence, recheck the target, tweak the assessment, etc., etc.

In Physical Welfare, we have long been asking and answering the question "what do we want them to know?" Although that question is still being asked, it is coupled with, "How well do they need to know it?" and "Will we have enough evidence for this standard?"

Furthermore, EBR has allowed our Professional Learning Community to strengthen by encouraging teams to create common assessments and calibrate our instruction, and grading, to gather common evidence. Common evidence and common assessments throughout a common curriculum are essential for meaningful conversation about student learning to take place on any team.

There is a certain level of give-and-take that is essential for this to work. Once a teacher has the experience of having a conversation with a student that shifts from "how many points" to "how can I show evidence of my learning", that teacher has shown a willingness to work towards creating more opportunities for those conversations to take place.

Due, in part, to our Physical Welfare content being heavily skills based, creating specific skills that we want students to focus on was relatively easy to do. Once we had identified the skills we felt were needed to put students on the path to lifelong wellness, we had to create gradations of those skills to promote our student-teacher conversations around this learning.

This focus on the targets and the gradations of learning has allowed conversations to take place around evidence. This, in turn, has allowed everyone, teachers and students, to focus on specific skills and dive deeper into that learning than ever before.

EBR'n with Art's PLC

Jon Grice - Fine Arts Division

Over the past year, our Visual Arts teachers decided to take twenty different Art classes and adopt Evidence Based Reporting across our curricular sequence. Similarly to our colleagues in Dance, Theatre, Orchestra, and Guitar, we took the all in approach to create common learning targets that would be used across all of the Art department classes. The process demanded collaborative participation from all team members and as a result, I was able to observe added benefits of how our teachers develop and use common curricular language, while realigning their assessment and grading practices.

To begin this process, we accepted that we would move away from using course specific learning targets and move towards a holistic set of learning targets. This was a major change since all of our previous Art department semester exams had close to 30 different categories that students were evaluated on! While the variety of outcomes reflected all of the singleton courses we offered, it also reflected a lack of common language throughout our program. We recognized that moving to EBR quickly changed this! As we began developing our holistic learning targets, the Art Teachers began to change the way we spoke about our curriculum immediately.

Our teachers were able to unify their language and speak about their lessons, instructional strategies, and assignments using common learning targets. I also saw this common language being used during observations, Open House, and when conversing informally with students and faculty. The unified language illustrated that the team was on the same page and able to articulate the department outcomes clearly and easily.

The other major result of moving to holistic learning targets for our Art Department was that teachers focused on their assessment and grading practices. From the initial stages of moving to EBR, the Art Team decided to unify the format of their rubrics to allow space for both teacher and student scoring and written reflections. While student involvement and reflection was always valued as part of the Art Department strategies, the new common unified language allowed us to achieve higher levels of assessment practices amongst all team members.

The Art faculty then considered how their holistic rubrics would be used for different course projects and in their gradebooks. They began to include specific success criteria that would be listed near each learning target on the rubric.

The added list of keywords and observable traits continued to help both our teachers and students to understand the specific expectations for each project. The team then began to layout their gradebooks and worked together to develop a plan of when and how often they would enter scores for each class. Together they developed unit by unit plans of when each targets would be assessed. Most impressively, towards the end of the first semester they opened up their gradebooks to determine how their initial plans ended up working out. Together they shared their grading practices and when their plans diverged from one another discussed ways to improve alignment.

Finally, the Art team has worked to continuously improve their inter-scorer reliability. During team meetings, they have discussed course projects and specific qualities that would earn a student a 4, 3, 2, 1 for each given target. While the team initially used this as a time to share, they have now began asking teachers to score the artworks first, then discuss reasons why they assigned a specific score.

This process has actively involved team members to engage in collaborative activities that allowed team members to align scoring and address concerns if a learning target was not as clear as it should be. While the process has not always been smooth the Art Team has continued to refine and improve their team's grading practices.

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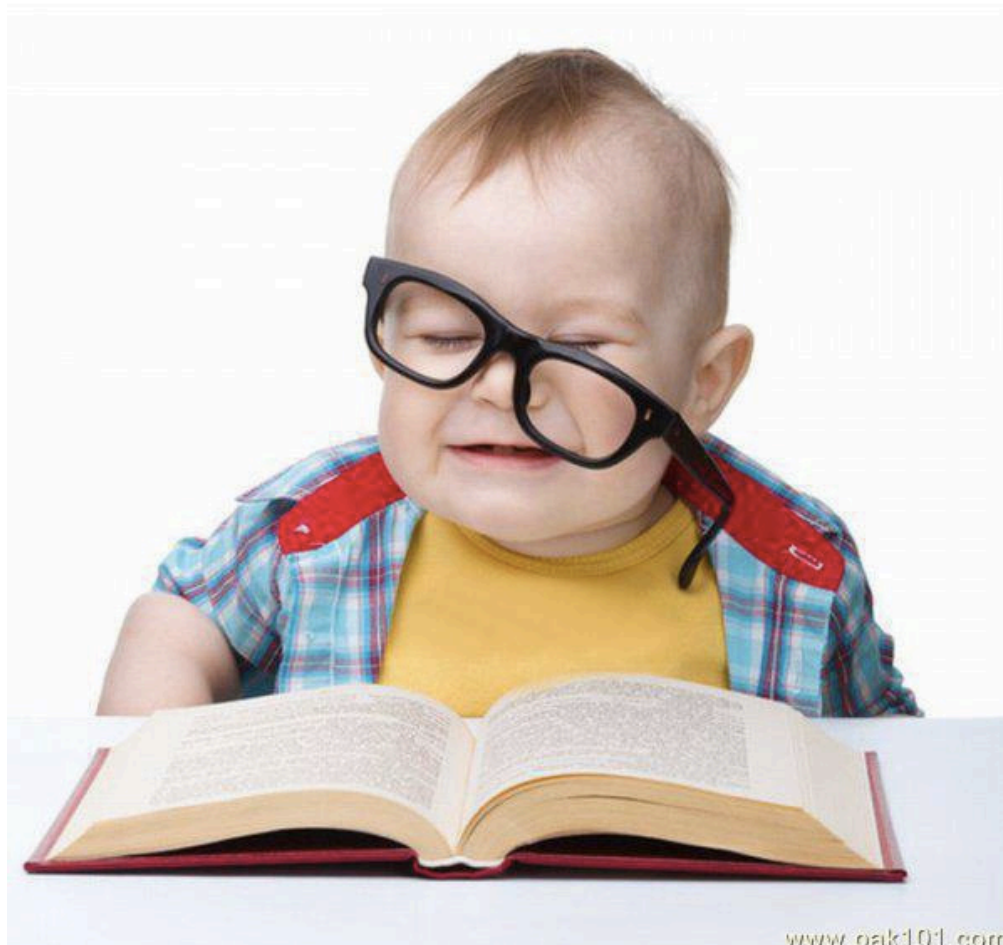
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Evidence-Based Collaboration

Anthony Reibel
Director of Assessment, Research, and Evaluation

This is a guide to support our curricular teams in effective evidence-based collaboration:

- **Always ask, "What's our purpose of collaborating with the evidence?"** Teams meet for three purposes only; to dialogue about student learning, to discuss student learning or to make decisions about student learning (Twadell & Erkins 2012). Dialoging about student learning is simply reviewing and commenting on student data or information. Discussing is more like brainstorming about how to move forward to promote or supporting student learning. And making decisions is the commitment to follow an action plan about student learning and elaborate on its effects.

- **Perform In-The-Moment humility:** It is important that teams build trust. But building trust can't happen without one key element In-The-Moment Humility. From his text "Humble Inquiry" Edgar H. Schein defines this as regarding one's own status as equal to someone else's status to accomplish a task

or goal. The goal in every school is "success for every student" therefore we all must come to the collaborative table with the student in mind not ourselves.

- **Engage around the question of 'How Well':** Engaging around the question of "What do we want students to know?" only gets us so far. To help teams focus on student proficiency or mastery the question of "How well a student must learn or master a skill or content area?" is a better starting place for collaboration.

- **Constantly ask, "Do we have enough of the right evidence for this standard?"** Interacting with this question is essential to understanding not only your quality and effectiveness of your assessments but it also keeps student proficiency in the center of the conversation. Assessments are events that provide evidence for the professional interpretation (teacher) of student learning. Assessments that don't yield plentiful evidence of the learning within a particular standard or-standards should be reviewed and redeveloped.

- **Set A Growth Focus:** Teams should avoid using evidence to

set threshold goals, such as "80% of students will be proficient in this skill." Instead they should set growth goals. A growth goal acts not as a threshold to be crossed but a personalized trajectory of learning. A growth goal sounds something like this "80% of students will increase their level of proficiency one gradation on the proficiency scale by the end of the year."

- **Can, Can't and Won't:** The evidence from assessment events will highlight one of three profiles of learning; a student who can, a student who can't and a student who won't. All three of these profiles must be handled differently, but starting with them is key to quality collaborative discussions about student learning. A CAN student is a student who is meeting the proficiency standards, a CAN'T student is a student who is providing evidence, but is not meeting proficiency, and finally a student who WON'T is s student who is not providing evidence for reasons such as insubordination or other social-emotional reasons.

Is this a "Can't Do" or "Won't Do" student?

Not Sure? See Marla Isreal and her team for help with identifying struggling students and getting them the help they need.

Our Evidence-Based Journey in Science

Steve Wood
Science Division

Science teachers have long understood the need to clearly share with students what they need to know, how they will learn it, and how their learning will be assessed. These ideas crystallized during and following professional development conversations at the Arboretum in the 2008-2009 school year. Those sessions, led by Cassie Erkens, focused on assessment for learning, and how we bring clarity for our students. What followed has been an ongoing focus on clearly defining learning targets, matching those to our assessments, and helping students know where they were on the journey.

Shortly after we began reviewing/creating learning targets in 2009, there were rumblings on the national scene about new science standards. In 2012, the National Research Council published "A Framework for K-12 Science Education." Soon after, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) were released, and Stevenson H.S. set out to implement these standards across the consortium beginning in 2013. One of the biggest shifts in the NGSS was the focus on "3-Dimensional" science learning, weaving together the science and engineering practices, the crosscutting concepts, and the disciplinary core ideas (science content).

As we have embarked on implementing the standards, it has become increasingly clear that, while we have been clear on communicating and assessing the disciplinary core ideas, we have been more challenged in assessing and providing feedback on the science and engineering practices. The Science and Engineering Practices include:

- Asking questions (Science) and Defining problems (Engineering)
- Developing and using models
- Planning and carrying out investigations
- Analyzing and interpreting data
- Using mathematics and computational thinking
- Constructing explanations (science) and designing solutions (engineering)
- Engaging in argument from evidence
- Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information

At the same time we were implementing NGSS, we have also been creating Student Learning Objectives (SLO's) that focus on the Science and Engineering Practices that run through all science courses. We have realized that to honor the nature of science as a process, the ideals of the NGSS, and the spirit of SLO's (growth over time), we need to develop learning targets that focus on teaching, assessing, and giving feedback on these Science and Engineering Practices. This includes shifting our focus more to the verbs of science (practices) while continuing to honor and appreciate the nouns of science (disciplinary core ideas).

Our learning journey has been informed by site visits to several schools who are currently using standards-based grading practices in science, such as in Solon, Iowa and Portland, Maine. In addition, our science teachers have read and discussed many related books, including "Rethinking Grading," "A Repair Kit for Grading," "The End of Average," "Most Likely to Succeed," etc. These resources and experiences have shaped our thinking on how we might be able to better focus our instruction, feedback, grading and reporting on science practices and not solely on disciplinary core ideas. In addition, we have learned a great deal by discussions with colleagues in other departments who have led the transition to EBR. Finally, we are reflecting on the work of the SEL Committee and how that might factor into our thinking. As we move toward EBR, science teams will consider including one SEL scaled target. The teams will teach and asses the target as well as measure growth over time.

This spring, Ken O'Connor, internationally-recognized expert in grading and reporting, lead the math and science staff development in April 2017. Our learning focused on best practices in grading, as well as connecting instruction to learning targets that thread throughout our courses.

Ken answered questions with science and math teachers throughout the day and in lunch time conversations.

Since the April staff development, we have had two lunch meetings to allow teachers to interact and ask questions of mathematics colleagues who have implemented EBR into their classrooms; these have been rich and informative conversations.

We have several science teams taking the lead on this work, re-imagining how our grading practices can promote clari ty on skills-focused

learning targets, link feedback the learning, and allow multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery.

Our College Prep Physics team has been grading and reporting on the disciplinary core ideas of physics, and is leading the transition to bringing the science practices to the forefront. This team has refined and reduced the number of learning targets it uses during the year

and has created scaled learning targets for transitioning to EBR. Other science teams are joining the conversation, with the following teams beginning Phase I EBR conversations with Tony Reibel: CP Physics, CP Biology, AC Chemistry, AP Biology, and Earth Science HN. This represents thirty of our science teachers! We are targeting the 2018-2019 school year for our first teams to make the conversion to EBR....and the journey will continue!

Cultivating Student Learning Accountability

Anthony Reibel
Director of Assessment, Research, and Evaluation

Too often teachers confuse compliance with accountability. Simply following directions and formulaically obeying the plan of the lesson is not accountability. In fact punishing students with zeros, sending the student to the dean and other such tactics when they fall short of following the procedure of learning only results in reduced motivation and performance.

Accountability is not about following rules and procedures rather it is staying committed to learning. It is being responsible in developing one's own self-efficacy and taking the initiative to follow through with the application of learned content and skills.

This takes a lot of effort to cultivate or even manage but as teachers can not throw in the towel and resort to the detrimental practices of point deduction or other passive aggressive moves such as using a passing grade to create accountability.

None of that works.

To cultivate this accountability, to help students feel accountable and connected to their learning, teacher should try and do the following:

1. Set clear expectations: Teachers need to be clear about what they expect from students. We must articulate the proficiency aspects of what exactly we are looking for from our students. We must involve the student in conversations and feedback about what we expect from them and how they will know whether they are successful or not. Clear expectations help outline to students what we want from them, how they are going to achieve it, and the criteria to self-assess whether they are hitting our expectation.

2. Deploy formative assessments: Students use formative assessments to practice skills, and more importantly, become fully aware whether they actual possess those skills. Formative assessment helps students see the skills and supporting content they will need to use to be proficient in a particular expectation. It also helps them decide how to acquire the skills or knowledge that may be lacking and more importantly it helps students begin to trust their own reflective thinking. Ultimately formative assessment builds learning accountability by allow students to gain a perspective about their own learning that is authentic, digestible and applicable.

3. Use Common Assessments: By combining common assessments with formative assessment we allow students to fail cheaply, in other words so failure of any kind is not a surprise and not avoided. If a teacher is using commonly developed formative assessments they can give a student an extended stretch of time to engage in reflective dialogue or independent thinking about their learning as well as give them time for the application of feedback, All of this allows for more accurate measurement of student performance which as we all know the more accurate something is the more we trust it.

4. Co-construct feedback: The most direct way to hold a student accountable is through the feedback we provide them. We must make sure that the feedback is open, honest, ongoing, and leads to action. Students need to know where they stand at all times to be held accountable. Even the slightest distortion in perspective by a student, (overconfident or unsure where they stand,) can lead to a distrust of the learning process.

If a student thinks they are doing well and feedback speaks otherwise, students will be quick to rationalize away the feedback in order to protect their self-perspective. In other words if feedback isn't clear and accurate students will always side with what they believe to be true about their learning, even if it is based on nothing except a general gut feeling.

By allowing students to first self-evaluate and then cross check it with the teacher we involve them more in their own learning and ensure that feedback is more accurate.

5. Use Evidence only to grade performance: Students need to be aware of what success criteria they are, or were, lacking during a performance. If a student received a low mark on their performance they must know exactly what supporting skill or content led to that low proficiency score. Conversely if they did extremely

well on a performance they must know what supporting skill or content got them there. If teachers simply leverage the evidence they invite a more formative dialogue which can lead to not only a clear indication of what the student is lacking but also why that supporting skill or content is important.

Ultimately the student will see that that particular supporting piece is essential to the mastering expectation (target) thus making the learning and application of it more valuable.

These five practices are the building blocks to creating a culture of learning accountability in your classroom. All five of these take time to implement but are essential to holding students accountable to learning. If all five are being implemented with fidelity accountability will be the norm.
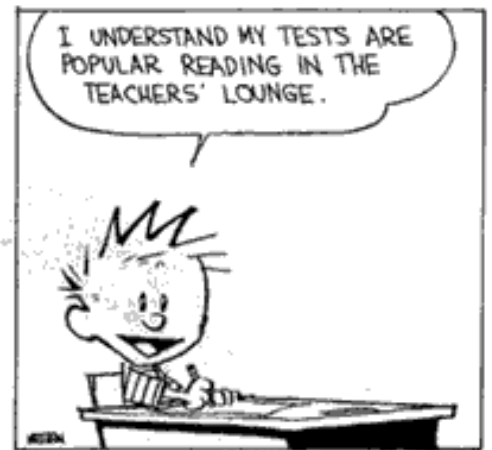
So my question is "If you are struggling with student accountability, which of these practices are you leaving out?"

Does your formative assessment help students self-advocate for their growth?

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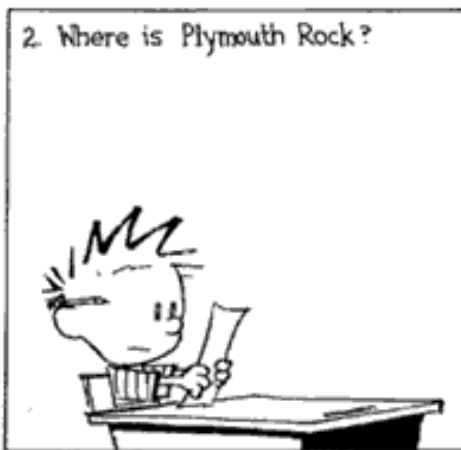
The Four "I" of Formative Instruction

By Bruce Vaughn
via Yearning For Learning

With all the interpretations of formative assessment out there it can get confusing. After reviewing an exhaustive list of formative assessment resources I have found that effective formative assessment can be summed up in four qualities:

- Intangible – A process, not a product
- Instantaneous – Low reaction time to assessment feedback
- Inseparable – Instruction and Assessment are all same thing, sewn together by a learning target
- Individualized – Student uses own thinking as a learning tool

Intangible

The understanding that teaching, assessment, and reflection are not a product but a process, scaled target awareness is key to making this happen. The intangible quality is two fold:

1. Assessment, Instruction, and Reflection cannot be treated separate from one another.
2. Outcomes-based assessment produces less reliable evidence than reflection-based assessment.

Instantaneous

The understanding that teaching and learning are instantaneous begs the question, "why do we take so long?" Learning can be seen as an incremental accumulation of knowledge and pay little attention to the notion that learning is not linear, but rather a function of non – linear proficiency development. In order to deepen their understanding of the instantaneous quality a teacher must pay attention to:

1. Student reaction time to feedback
2. Moments in the lesson where they can change direction based on student needs

Inseparable

From the work with proficiency based targets tachers must see assessment and instruction as the same entity. In other words, assessment and instruction must occupy the same pedogical space for effective formative learning to occur.

Teachers must know their gradation of learning (target) so well that at any given moment they can both simultaneously judge where a student is at in their learning and provide differentiated instruction to growth that students learning.

Individualized

By placing the feedback burden on the student we increase reflection time so that students can begin to rely on and trust their own thinking more during the learning process.

When students begin to show autonomy in learning the lessons can become far less cookie cutter and more individualized for the student. Not because the teacher individualized it but because the student starts to use their own thinking as the lesson material!

Revisiting The Essential Questions for Learning

Lauren Rochus- via Eduspeak

Rick Stiggins is undoubtedly one of the most prolific and articulate assessment experts. I have learned so much from the work he and his colleagues have shared over the years. One of the most enduring principles that his work articulates is the idea that students must be kept at the center of the assessment process. As such, in Classroom Assessment for Student Learning (Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, & Chappuis, 2004), Stiggins and colleagues suggest that if we want to use assessment as a tool for learning, students need to

- Know where they're going
- Know where they are now
- Know how to close the gap
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Rick found that when these items are presented as questions students can use to self-reflect (What am I supposed to learn? Where am I now in my learning? What do I need to do to close the gap?), the resulting pedagogical realizations are much more powerful. At the same time, I have unfortunately also seen these questions manipulated into a testing experience for which the purpose is not growth and learning but rather an identification of results and indicators of achievement.

To avoid this perspective and a focus on proficiency, we must create a new perspective where teachers can begin to shift the focus from testing and measurement to growth and learning,

thereby providing students with the metacognitive experience that is essential to the learning process. To be very clear, I do not believe that anything is wrong with the principles that assessment experts have articulated; in fact, we believe that they are essential to the learning process. However, our experience has been that we can enhance this metacognitive experience for students when we focus their attention on proficiency. To that end, I offer the following corrollary questions that students should ask and be able to answer every day in class.

- Why am I not where I am supposed to be?
- What thinking led me to where I currently am?
- Knowing this, how am I going to get from where I am now to where I need to be?

By beginning with "Why am I not where I am supposed to be?" proficiency is driven to the center of the instructional exchanges between teacher and student. The main advantage to this centralized positioning of proficiency is that it requires the teacher to communicate more effectively and students to reflect more efficiently. The dual perspective of this first question is also powerful in that it requires students not only to know what proficient is but also to reflect with an eye on their current proficiency.

The second question, "What thinking led me to where I currently am?" forces students to dive deeper into the

reflection, asking themselves to make claims about what misunderstandings they may have had related to their answer from question one. For example, let's say a proficiency-based target stated, "I can consistently recognize vocabulary in a familiar context." If a teacher were to have students look at this target and ask themselves, "What thinking led me to where I currently am?" Students now would be able to reflect on and observe what thinking patterns might have led them astray.

The third question, "How am I going to get from where I am now to where I need to be?" addresses the universal cure to any problem: action. In the original set of questions, students answer the question, "What do I need to do to close the gap?" But with this new proficiency-based question, student action is now directly related to the success criteria of a target. When a proficiency-based target such as the one above is used with the question, "How am I going to get from where I am now to where I need to be?" the student can become more self-prescriptive and far more deliberate in action.

By shaping essential questions in this manner, proficiency is placed at the core of instruction and places more importance on reflection practices in the classroom, which is essential to creating a culture of learning in our classrooms.

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In Support of District and Division Core Values

Darshan Jain
Mathematics Division

Adlai E. Stevenson HS is a nationally recognized school of excellence. The profusion of accolades and recognitions indicate that our students learn and learn well supported by faculty, staff, community, and administration. This longitudinal success has been sustained by decades long engagement in continuous improvement cycles.

At times, a false prerequisite is placed as a condition for engagement: "What problem are we trying to fix?" As continuous improvement nearly always beckons change, it is important to remember that improvement does not necessarily imply a current state of failure or dysfunction. Edie Holcomb in Asking the Right Questions: Tools for Collaboration and School Change conveys this succinctly, "...when we talk about improvement, we're not thinking 'horrible-to-wonderful.' We're thinking 'good-better-best'" (Holcomb, p. 60).

If we cannot attest that we have met our commitment to "Success for Every Student" every day, in every course, then we have not yet achieved our mission. Considering changes to meet that mission is our responsibility and our opportunity. Perhaps in the case of our organization, engaging in continuous improvement beckons us to a journey from better to even better to even even better. What is clear is that meeting our commitment to "Success for Every Student" calls us to engage in change for the growth it yields in student and adult learning.

As we assess the change that standards based grading (SBG) or evidence based reporting (EBR) offers, we must consider how it aligns with our core values as curricular divisions and as a District.

Q: Does SBG/EBR promote interdependent collaboration within our professional learning communities?

A: Yes. The primary purpose of professional learning communities (PLC) is to foster the learning and growth of professionals as we develop week-by-week, year-by-year into increasingly more effective practitioners. Consider PLC Question #1: "What do we want students to learn?" (DuFour et al, 2010). We have worked for many years to develop, articulate, and integrate learning targets into our planning and instructional practices. Students today are more capable of identifying the work of the day and in naming specific areas of struggle. This is most observable as students seek help from teachers or Student Learning Program (SLP) staff. Rare is it to hear students say, "I don't understand anything." Rather, more often, students say, "I don't understand this target." This work has laid a good foundation.

PLC Question #2 reads "How will we know if they have learned?" (DuFour et al, 2010). Building on this we can ask, "How well have they learned?" (Gobble et al, 2015). It is the "how well" that is the primary change and a challenging question that curriculum teams must address. This is done through teams developing gradients of proficiency that makes explicit the pathway for growth.

The work of teams becomes increasingly more interdependent around adult learning as teachers develop, revise, and use the team's proficiency standards alongside evidence of students' work. This calls for conversation, consensus, and calibration. In turn, this yields growth for the team. Consider also the work teams have engaged in using conversation protocols to review common assessment data. The review of individual and team results to identify best practices and effective instruction strategies have more validity knowing that the proficiency standards and scoring have been calibrated across all educators on the team. In addition, as teachers make common place the "how well" conversations using formal and informal feedback, there is a shift in students' perception of their learning away from binary judgments of "I get it; I don't get it" and towards assessments of growth: "I am developing because _____ and I need to improve _____ to demonstrate my proficiency."

The work of developing a proficiency-based learning model has great power to address PLC Questions #3 and #4 (DuFour et al, 2010). Respectively, "What will we do if they don't learn?" and "What will we do if they already know it?" As teams develop, articulate and integrate a gradient of proficiency, communication around how to improve and how to extend learning are made transparent. With the former, patterns of struggle over targets can be grouped by standards.

Thus, support can be provided that addresses overarching needs that transcend multiple areas of

study. This can change students' perception from "I need help on this, and this, and this, and this" to "If I can improve on this standard, I can also get better at these targets." The shift in perspective, allows students to engage in remediation knowing their efforts will have wider impact over the important components of the course. With the latter, teams must develop and provide opportunities to extend students' experiences if they demonstrate mastery. This provides teams opportunities to shift perspectives of teaching and learning from attainment and towards growth for every student.

Q: Does SBG/EBR promote learning within the discipline that transcends course-specific experiences?

A: Yes. When students' experiences with overarching practices (i.e., math practices, science and engineering standards, essential communication skills, computer science practices, etc.) are purposefully planned and explicitly taught, students can develop the tools to deepen their knowledge-level learning in the progression of courses across the discipline. It is the practices that gives students access to unfamiliar content. Students' perspective on the purpose of learning shifts from one of only acquiring knowledge (i.e., content) to also acquiring the skills (i.e., practices) to master all courses of the discipline. What transcends is the thinking processes that support learning across coursework. This is well supported by the four-stage organization (Gobble et al, 2015) of standards, objectives, targets, within EBR:

I)   Standards of the Discipline (i.e., Why are we doing all of this?)

II)   Expectations of Learning (i.e., What am I asking you to do?)
III)   Gradation of Expectations (i.e., How well should you do this?)
IV)   Conditions for Success (i.e., What are the supporting content and prerequisite skills needed to meet the expectation?)

The ability to promote students' growth mindset (i.e., intelligence is developed and malleable, Dweck, 2006) is often cited when describing the benefit of the expanse of time available for students to learn, relearn and demonstrate mastery within EBR. In EBR, judgment of students' demonstrated work is with respect to the preponderance of the body of evidence with consideration for growth over time (calibrated against the team's expectations.) Students have time to remediate and reperform within a mastery window set by the team; thus, early assessment of struggle does not confound final evaluation of student learning.

However, students growth mindset is also developed by limiting the number of proficiency metrics students must manage and negotiate. Consider a course organized only by conditions of success (i.e., targets). Here a student must manage between 5-8 targets per unit (i.e., 60 to 96 proficiency metrics over two semesters) for the course. Refocusing on "Why are we doing all of this?" (i.e., standards of the discipline) allows students to manage between 4-7 standards that are practiced through the use of 5-8 targets per unit. Since the proficiency gradient remains consistent across the course, addressing the "how well am I doing?" question is more manageable for students and for teachers. Within EBR, the Student Learning Objective (SLO) is not an external event, rather the normative feedback mechanism around the essential standards of

the course. Progress in the course towards proficiency is always a "how well" conversation against the stated expectations.

Q: Does SBG/EBR strengthen students' engagement in the learning cycle?

A: Yes. Writing for Forbes about the speed of changes in the modern workforce, Margie Warrell cited Alvin Toffler: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn" (Warrell, 2014). EBR provides pathways for students to develop into agile learners. In addition, central to our commitment to "Success for Every Student" is that our students not only grow and maximize their academic potential, but also grow to be socio-emotionally mature and responsible citizens. EBR provides for developing both facilities.

With the former, since EBR calls attention to students' progress towards the standards, students must continually manage their proficiencies over time. The students' perspective shifts from acquiring and demonstrating learning momentarily to one of continually demonstrating proficiencies in new contexts and to sustain this over the assessment window until a final evaluation is made. Rather than students climbing a mountain (i.e., attainment), they must continually spin multiple plates (i.e., sustained growth and self-management). Students must learn and be agile in unlearning and relearning to meet proficiency. Students can engage in formative feedback not as moments of judgment but rather as signposts on their learning journey. In addition, students' reflections and actions are critical, just as they are in any modern work environment centered on a continuous improvement model

of growth.

With the latter, teams can develop social-emotional competencies within classroom social and curricular contexts. For instance, Math Practice #3 calls students to "…listen or read the arguments of others, decide whether they make sense, and ask useful questions to clarify or improve the arguments" (CCSS, 2010). Here the social-emotional competency of social-awareness can be addressed to help students "understand others' perspectives to effectively interpret their arguments" (Inside Mathematics, 2017) and relationship-skills can be addressed by "listen[ing] actively to further explore the arguments of others" (Inside Mathematics, 2017). Presently, teams can report out students' growth (or concerns) around the social-emotional competencies of self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. Developing a mindset for academic learning (and relearning) as well as developing social-emotional competencies support students' engagement in their learning.

The national awakening in education is one of recognizing that the time-based, age-dependent, factory-model of education does not fully meet the emerging needs of a fast changing workforce. In considering changes, standards based grading supports expectations of students retained knowledge and application of learning in addition to providing context to socio-emotional growth towards self-management and self-advocacy.

Engagement in continuous improvement cycles draws us closer to achieving our mission of "Success for Every Student." When implemented with fidelity, standards based grading catalyzes learning for students and practitioners in alignment to the core principles of curricular divisions and District. The change builds off of our work making explicit what students will learn and moves us towards articulating how well students are learning. The organization of learning into a hierarchy does not dilute content, but rather supports access to unfamiliar content by strengthening the use of the discipline's practices (i.e., skills). Finally, students' efficacy as learners is strengthened as they manage both academic and social-emotional expectations of the classroom.

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