

Clarifying Learning Strategies

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Annotated Examples of Standards

Description

The teacher shares annotated work (representing different levels of quality) with students from another class, previous year, or teacher mock-up. The examples are annotated to highlight specific features of quality (or lack thereof).

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides concrete illustration of the success criteria as they relate to the learning target. When learning new content, the success criteria may still be abstract for some learners (because the content is new). Annotated examples make the abstract more concrete and provide a vision of what quality looks like at varying degrees.

Students can make connections between the examples as compared to the quality of their own work. This can assist them in self-assessment and monitoring their own learning, as well as in generating ideas of what they might do to improve.

Small groups of students might also find it helpful to look at Annotated Examples to generate strategies that could move the lower-quality examples to higher levels.

Implementation

This strategy is especially useful with writing assignments, multistep problem solving, science lab reports, and other types of complex student assignments that have multiple sections or multiple characteristics of quality. This can be done prior to students completing their own work or after initial work has been done as part of a revision process.

Tips

Teachers should anonymize work or try to use work from a previous year or different class. Begin saving samples of student work now. Consider sharing with colleagues to speed the collection process and build a larger sample base. In a pinch, use teacher mock-ups in lieu of actual student work.

To increase student clarity, it is helpful if the annotations are worded the same as the success criteria that have been shared with students.

If content allows for creativity or multiple solutions, select varying examples of student work products to illustrate different approaches that would be acceptable ways to show understanding.

Comparison Analysis

Description

Before students begin their independent work, teachers lead them through an analysis of two to three pieces of work to identify evidence of learning targets and/or success criteria.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

By having students talk through examples for analysis, teachers and students benefit in multiple ways. Students get to see completed work before beginning, which will provide them with the “big picture” as well as concrete examples of success criteria. Teachers get to hear and observe the clarity of the learning intentions for students.

Implementation

It may be helpful to have students break into small groups, each with their own copy of the work to be analyzed. Ask all groups to compare the work samples and come to agreement on what criteria they think all of the samples have addressed and to what degree each has met them. Then each group can report out to the class for discussion and consensus.

Use of this strategy sets students up to analyze examples, identify exemplars, and answer the question “What are you doing and why?”

This comparison can also be used as a precursor to leading the class in generating a rubric or checklist of success criteria.

Tips

The younger the students, the bigger the quality gap needs to be. Work must be anonymous and random. It may be necessary to state explicitly that the examples used are not the only ways to reach the end result.

Begin saving samples of student work now. Consider sharing with colleagues to speed the collection process and build a larger sample base. If no appropriate authentic student examples are available, use teacher mock-ups in lieu of actual student work (or alter an actual student’s work slightly). In a pinch, use teacher mock-ups in lieu of actual student work.

Exemplars of Student Work

Description

The teacher shares exemplars of student work, so that students can internalize the characteristics of high-quality work. The teacher uses high-quality work from another class, a previous year, or a teacher mock-up to share with current students.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides concrete illustration of the success criteria as they relate to the learning target. When learning new content, the success criteria can still be abstract for many learners (because the content is new). Analyzing exemplars and comparing them with the success criteria may make the criteria more concrete and accessible to all students.

Students can make connections between the exemplars as compared to the quality of their own work. This may assist them in self assessment learning, as well as in generating their own ideas of what they might do to improve.

Implementation

The teacher uses anonymous learner work from another class, previous year, or teacher mock-up to share with current learners. The selected examples should be well chosen, and there should be a two-way or small-group discussion of strengths and weaknesses that can be seen in each sample. That way, learners can come to understand what quality work looks like and how it differs from less-accomplished work.

Exemplars should clearly demonstrate the highest levels of quality related to the identified criteria. That way, students can easily use them as models for their own work. Sometimes focusing only on models to emulate is less confusing for students than looking also at imperfect examples.

Tips

This strategy works very well when a teacher regularly shares success criteria with his or her learners.

Begin saving samples of student work now. Consider sharing with colleagues to speed the collection process and build a larger sample base. If no appropriate authentic student examples are available, use teacher mock-ups in lieu of actual student work (or alter an actual student's work slightly).

If content allows for creativity or multiple solutions, it will be important to select varying examples of student work products to illustrate different approaches that would be acceptable ways to show understanding.

Groups Discuss Expectations

Description

After the teacher shares the learning targets, students discuss them and/or the success criteria in small groups and then report out to the whole class about what they think they are expected to learn and questions they may have.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This small-group discussion allows students to safely share ideas and ask questions about what they think they are learning and what quality looks like. The benefits of sharing with the whole group are that students receive even greater clarity by hearing what other groups agreed on and that teachers get to hear from all groups to be sure there is no confusion before starting the work.

This also helps students take more responsibility for their own learning by involving them in creating a new rubric or other form of success criteria (see Student-Developed Rubrics).

Implementation

In small groups, students take a few minutes to review and clarify the learning expectations. Sometimes prompts are helpful to guide small-group conversation: for example, “What are we learning?”, “Why is it important?”, and “How will I know when I have learned it?”

Often students feel freer to ask questions or to offer answers when they are interacting with their peers. Also, students will strengthen their understanding when they have to explain to others, and peers will sometimes benefit from an explanation in “student language.”

Tips

Groups can be set up in a variety of ways. In the beginning it may be useful for the teacher to set the groups. Then, as time progresses and depending on the work, students may self-select groups.

The teacher should be sure to check for understanding and address any confusions that came from the small-group discussion before students jump into the work.

Learning Targets/Learning Intentions

Description

The teacher communicates to students the intended learning (learning targets) for the lesson. The teacher writes clear, valuable, and accessible learning intentions on the board or on a handout, makes purposeful reference to them at the start of the lesson, and refers back to them throughout the lesson in a way that supports student learning.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Sharing learning targets/learning intentions makes the learning path and expectations clear to all.

The use of learning targets provides focus for the teacher so that alignment of success criteria, instruction, learning tasks, and assessment is clear.

Implementation

Learning targets/intentions, not the tasks or activities students will participate in during the lesson, are what the students are expected to learn or understand.

Referring to them throughout the lesson helps keep learners focused on the task at hand and, at the end of the lesson, can help students self assess their level of understanding.

It is also helpful to support students in making the connection between the daily learning target and the larger goals for the instructional unit or standard. This helps students access prior knowledge from previous lessons and provides a context and purpose for the learning.

Tips

If a learning target contains academic vocabulary that is new to students, it is often worth taking time to unpack the learning target to discuss the new vocabulary (see Student-Friendly Language or Translating Learning Targets).

Simply referring to the learning targets may not always be enough to truly clarify the learning for students, especially when new terminology or content is involved. In these cases it is recommended to use additional strategies that involve students discussing the learning targets, looking at examples of completed work and success criteria, etc.

Planning with KWL

Description

The K-W-L chart, which tracks what a student knows (K), wants to know (W), and has learned (L) about a topic, can be used before, during, and after a topic is taught. As a planning tool, this strategy is useful to help clarify both learning targets and success criteria. It allows the teacher to determine students' prior knowledge related to specific learning targets. The teacher is then able to better focus lessons based on this information (responsive lesson planning).

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

KWL charts work well to view the individual student or the entire class to understand where they are in their learning.

Items in the K column help inform the teacher of what content the students may just need to quickly review, and helps learners access their prior knowledge about a topic. This will help integrate new content into their existing schema.

Items in the W column inform the teacher how to prioritize instructional planning efforts, and for the learner it creates purpose and excitement for the learning. This is where the learner sets personal objectives for his or her learning.

Items in the L column serve as a check for understanding so all are clear on what still needs to be addressed.

Implementation

Students begin by brainstorming everything they Know about a topic. This information is recorded in the K column of a K-W-L chart. Students then generate a list of questions about what they Want to Know about the topic. These questions are listed in the W column of the chart. During or after the learning, students answer the questions that are in the W column. This new information, as well as other new content that they have Learned, is recorded in the L column of the K-W-L chart.

This activity has many configurations:

- Whole group.
- Small groups first, which then contribute to a whole-group poster.
- Individually.

If done in small groups or individually, at the end of the lesson, the teacher asks students to share their learning notes with the class as he or she records their responses on the large KWL chart.

Tips

Have several questions ready to help students brainstorm in the K column. If they make an association that is vague or incorrect, pose additional questions to help determine if the question is actually knowledge or if it is something they are wondering about (for example, “What made you think of that?”). For items shared that you know are incorrect or that others disagree with, you can suggest that they be worded as a question and added to the W column because there may be disagreement.

For the W column: Sometimes students have trouble coming up with ideas when you ask “What do you want to learn?” Have additional questions prepared to prompt them (example: “What do you think you will learn?” or identify something from the K column, and ask “What would you like to learn more about this idea?”). Also, post a few questions of your own in the column about the upcoming learning to provoke interest.

For the L column: As the lesson takes place, if students have individual copies of the group KWL chart, they can record answers to the W column questions as they go, or add things they found interesting.

Be sure to have a plan to address W column questions that students don’t address, ideally having them consult additional resources to find out the answers.

As additional thoughts surface for any column, allow students to add those thoughts using sticky notes.

Planning/Writing Frames

Description

The teacher provides structured frameworks or outlines for student work, such as writing webs, graphic organizers, or blank outlines. These planning frames are designed to be directly tied to the learning target and success criteria and are presented to students to assist them in self assessment.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

The frame communicates important information to the student about what is expected in the assignment with regard to its content, format, or both. Therefore, the learner has a higher likelihood of meeting the criteria for success.

Students may also use frames to self assess, by making notes about their learning to add to the organizer or by writing questions on portions of the frame where they get stuck or are confused.

Implementation

The steps or components for successfully completing a task are broken down and put into a frame or organizer that students can use as a guide while they work. The teacher not only provides the tool, but also leads a discussion about how to effectively use it, so that students can take full advantage of what the tool offers.

If possible, the discussion about using the frame may be illustrated with examples to ensure that students are clear on the meaning of each step.

Tips

You can create these frames ahead of time to present to and be used by students, or you can start an organizer, and the class can add to it as the class helps create the success criteria.

Frames are good ways to help students keep track of the criteria for successfully implementing a process (like writing or problem solving) and to help them monitor their progress.

These types of frames can be confusing if the task has multiple approaches to success. They are better suited for processes in which the learner should follow a structured set of steps or tasks.

Rubric Cards

Description

The teacher explains a rubric, its levels, and how it is applied to an assignment (see [Share Rubrics](#) [Share Rubrics](#)). Students, working in small groups, then evaluate several student work samples, according to the rubric.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Through this type of analysis and discussion, all students have a clear and shared understanding of the teacher's expectations. They also see different levels of quality for a task or process so they can compare their own work along the way to self-monitor.

It can be empowering for students to see what it looks like when a beginner completes the assigned task versus someone who has mastered it, and they generate ideas about how they could improve when it is time for revisions.

In addition, if sample work is chosen carefully, it can help students identify the various ways a successful product or performance might look. It can help students avoid feeling that they are “breaking the rules” or doing it wrong just by thinking creatively.

Implementation

The rubric cards are colored index cards, similar in size and make to ABCD Cards, with each color corresponding to one level of the rubric and printed with the rubric level and description.

Each group has a set of rubric cards. After a specified period of time, students are asked to use them to vote as a group on the score they would assign each sample. The students in each group must be prepared to discuss the score they assigned, the rationale for the score, and how the sample could be improved. The teacher leads a discussion using the rubric card votes as way to organize the order in which the groups give their feedback. For example, the teacher may want to start with a higher vote and then go to a lower one, or vice versa.

The selected examples should be well chosen from another class, previous year, or teacher mock-up, and the examples should support discussion about both strengths and weaknesses. That way, students can come to understand what quality work looks like and how it differs from less accomplished work.

Tips

If you plan to have students engage in giving peer feedback, this is a great activity to do first so they are clear what success looks like at varying levels.

Begin saving samples of student work now. Consider sharing with colleagues to speed the collection process and build a larger sample base. If no appropriate authentic student examples are available, use teacher mock-ups in lieu of actual student work (or alter an actual student's work slightly).

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Seeing the Big Picture

Description

The teacher provides a graphic organizer, like a learning map or concept map, to help students connect the daily learning target to the larger unit topic or standard.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This type of organizer communicates meaningful information to the student about how the learning for today fits into the context of a larger learning outcome. This helps provide purpose to the learner.

Students can also use organizers to summarize each day by adding notes about their learning to the relevant section of the organizer. At the end of the unit or series of lessons the organizer addresses, it can also serve as a study/review guide.

Implementation

The teacher may display a large poster of the organizer on the wall as well as distribute individual copies to students. When sharing the learning target for the day, the teacher can point out where it fits into the larger learning sequence and how what students learned yesterday and what they will learn tomorrow will connect.

Use graphic organizers to clarify learning targets by highlighting relationships among major concepts, sub-concepts, vocabulary, and ideas.

Tips

The teacher can create organizers ahead of time to present to and be used by students, or the teacher can start an organizer, and the class can add to it as the learning occurs.

This is a useful tool for helping students monitor their learning progress. Toward the end of a unit, the teacher may wish to have students highlight (see Traffic Lighting Self) their organizer, showing their level of understanding of the components to determine what they may still need extra help with.

Writing webs, graphic organizers, and blank outlines are readily available online for a wide range of assignments in various subjects.

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Share Examples

Description

The teacher shares examples of varying levels of quality, so that students will internalize the characteristics of high-, medium-, and lesser-quality work. The teacher uses examples of student work from another class, previous year, or teacher mock-up to share with current students.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides concrete illustration of the success criteria as they relate to the learning target. When learning new content, the success criteria may still be abstract for many learners (because the vocabulary may also be new). Analyzing examples and comparing them with the success criteria may make the criteria more concrete and accessible to all students.

Students have the opportunity to make comparisons between the quality of the different examples and their own work. This may assist them in identifying their level of quality during self assessment. Seeing examples that are of higher quality than their own may assist them in generating their own ideas of what they might do to improve.

Implementation

The teacher should engage students in a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each example according to the success criteria. Examples should clearly demonstrate the different levels of quality related to the identified criteria. That way, students can easily use them as models to compare with their own work to assess where they are.

This strategy is well suited for using success criteria that are already in the form of a rubric. It can be done with a simple list of success criteria as well but may require a bit more discussion of what must be present to meet the criteria for success.

Tips

Begin saving samples of student work now. Consider sharing with colleagues to speed the collection process and build a larger sample base. If no appropriate authentic student examples are available, use teacher mock-ups in lieu of actual student work (or alter an actual student's work slightly).

If content allows for creativity or multiple solutions, it will be valuable to select varying examples of student work products to illustrate different approaches that would be acceptable ways to show understanding.

Success Criteria

Description

The teacher shares with students the criteria that guide the collection of evidence of intended learning for a specific lesson or piece of work.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Students have a clear picture of the teacher's expectations and are provided with clear, accessible descriptors of quality for a task or process so they can compare their own work along the way to self-monitor.

It can be empowering for students to be crystal clear on what the expectations are so they can use the criteria to set goals, self-monitor, and revise.

Implementation

The teacher writes clear, valuable, and accessible success criteria on the board or on a handout; makes purposeful reference to them at the start of the lesson; and refers back to them during or at the end of the lesson, in a way that supports student learning.

This strategy is similar to but importantly different from "Learning Intentions/Learning Targets." Here, the emphasis is on specific forms of evidence that signal that the student really "gets it." In the learning intentions strategy, though, the emphasis is more on what the student is expected to learn or understand after the lesson is taught.

Tips

The success criteria should all be directly linked to the learning target for the lesson. The success criteria may be presented in different forms (e.g., questions, rubric, scoring guide, checklist) and written in language accessible to all learners.

It is important to help learners understand that work doesn't always meet the success criteria on the first try and that mistakes are part of learning new things. By teaching students how to use the criteria to self-assess and revise their work, teachers may increase the likelihood that students are motivated to keep trying until they achieve success.

In order for success criteria to be formative and relevant, ensure that none of the success criteria are extraneous (like spelling for example, if that isn't what you are teaching); otherwise, you will be assessing past learning instead of the learning target for the day.

Share Rubrics

Description

The teacher shares success criteria in the form of a rubric with the students. The teacher shares a rubric so that students can internalize the characteristics of high-quality and lesser-quality work.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Students have a clear picture of the teacher's expectations and different levels of quality for a task or process so they can compare their own work along the way to self-monitor.

It can be empowering for students to see descriptions of what it looks like when a beginner completes the assigned task versus someone who has mastered it, they generate ideas about how they could improve when it is time for revisions.

Implementation

When assigning a learning task, the teacher shares a rubric that describes work at different levels of proficiency based on a set of criteria.

The rubric should be well chosen or designed, and it should be presented as part of a two-way or small-group discussion of the strengths and weaknesses discussed in the different levels of the rubric.

This way, students can come to understand what quality work looks like and how it differs from less accomplished work. The teacher may choose to use his or her own rubric, one designed with the help of the students, or one produced by an outside agency.

To create a rubric:

1. Identify the type of rubric to be used: task-specific or generic, holistic or analytic, weighted or developmental.
2. Determine the levels and scale.
3. Write the descriptors (success criteria).

Tips

It is helpful to illustrate each level of proficiency according to the rubric, by using sample student work or teacher-generated examples. The language in a rubric should always be accessible to all learners.

Multiple rubrics are readily available online for a wide range of assignments in various subjects.

If you are new to creating rubrics, many resources are available online to give you step-by-step guidance. In addition, some websites will allow you to make a rubric online using their software. If a generic rubric (one that can be applied to lots of different assignments, such as a six-trait writing rubric) is used, the discussion should directly address how the criteria in the rubric relate to the specific assignment it is being used to assess.

When using a rubric to assess/provide feedback: If you use a rubric that has multiple indicators on it, make sure that you focus only on the portion of the rubric that is relevant to that day's learning target so as not overwhelm or confuse your students.

When using a rubric, it is important that students will have a chance to receive feedback (or self assess) and revise their work to reach the next level of quality. Otherwise, a checklist may be more appropriate.

Starter Prompts

Description

The teacher clarifies what is happening during a lesson by separating for students the learning target, the learning task, the activity or assessment that will be used, the success criteria, and the relevance of the learning. Starter prompts work best when posted publicly in the classroom. Starter prompts may also be precursors to developing checklists and rubrics as a class.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Helping students clarify the learning and what it looks like to be successful with these prompts helps both students and teachers separate the learning (content) from the context and activity. It also prevents students from needing to ask “How good is good enough?”

Implementation

Teachers use a framework to help students unpack the learning target and success criteria. These four prompts help students (1) outline what they will learn, (2) explain what they will do, (3) describe how they will know if the work they are doing is good, and (4) give the target (learning) relevancy.

1. We are learning to . . . (this prompt may vary)
2. We will show we can do this by . . .
3. To know how well we are learning this, we’ll look for . . .
4. It is important to learn this because . . .

Tips

Some teachers cordon off portions of their board to post the different aspects of this clarification strategy. Others use different colors to clarify the learning targets, activity, success criteria, and relevance.

Student-Friendly Language or Translating Learning Targets

Description

The teacher clarifies learning targets by using language that students have prior knowledge of or by creating student-friendly definitions.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides the scaffolding that many students need to understand the learning target and to have a clear picture of what success looks like.

Implementation

Identify targets with which students may have difficulty. Check for understanding with the students. What do they think each target means? Identify the word(s) or phrase(s) needing clarification. Define the term(s) identified. Convert the definition into language (or a visual) that students will understand. Try out the revised target with students to gauge its effectiveness.

Remember that the ultimate goal is correct use of academic language. Consider what it takes to scaffold to the desired term, which may involve using visuals or manipulatives. Having students help with this translation may be a next step in increasing their academic vocabulary.

Tips

Teachers may color-code the learning target by assigning each new vocabulary word a color and then by providing a student-friendly definition off to the side in the same color, so students can refer back to it throughout the lesson.

Student-Developed Rubrics

Description

The whole class collaboratively develops a rubric, guided by the teacher, with the goal that students come to “own” the quality criteria. The teacher keeps the rubric-development discussion on track so that the rubric is appropriate and comprehensive, but still student owned.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides concrete illustration of the success criteria as they relate to the learning target. When learning new content, the success criteria can still be abstract for many learners (because the content is new).

When students feel ownership over the criteria, they are more likely to remember them as they are completing their own work, therefore getting to a higher quality of work with less need for revision.

This can assist them in self assessment and monitoring their own learning, as well as in generating their own ideas of what they might do to improve.

Implementation

The teacher presents a large poster that is the shell of the rubric with criteria down the side and performance levels across the top (i.e., Advanced, Proficient, Partially Proficient, and Unsatisfactory). In addition to the shell, have the descriptors filled in for the Proficient level.

The teacher presents the rubric and the Proficient level descriptors fully to ensure that all students understand them. Together, as a class, the teacher leads the class in creating the descriptions for Partially Proficient.

Then, students work in small groups to fill in descriptions for Unsatisfactory and Advanced based on taking it up a notch or down a notch given what they already have in Proficient and Partially Proficient.

The teacher can then ask small groups to share out and chart the results in the blank categories on the rubric. The final rubric can be typed up and given to the students to use for self assessment and revising their work.

If students have not had exposure to rubrics before, it is often helpful to spend a class period providing practice creating a rubric with something that isn't content related and that all students could speak to (for example, playground behavior).

Extension for older students or students who have practice creating/using rubrics:

Provide small groups with examples of work at varying degrees of proficiency. Groups decide if some are better than others and put them in order from lowest to highest quality. Each group then shares with the whole class what reasons they had for the order they selected. The teacher then summarizes these ideas on a chart and helps facilitate combining ideas until there are criteria to put along the top.

With the students back in small groups, the teacher provides them with blank rubric posters with only the performance levels filled in (for example, 1-Unacceptable, 2-Fair, 3-Good, 4-Excellent). Each group writes in the criteria name along the top.

Students go back to their sample work and the levels that they assigned them to create draft descriptions for each level. After the allotted time, have students tape their posters to the wall.

Students walk around the room, reading the rubrics their classmates created. Students put green sticky dots next to descriptions they agree with. For descriptions they disagree with, they can post pink sticky notes on their classmates' posters with an explanation of what they disagree with and why.

At this point, someone needs to take time to synthesize the feedback from the posters to create a draft rubric for the class to review. This can be the teacher (do it that evening or on a planning break if possible), or in older grades it could be a pair or small group of students.

When the draft is completed, it is shared with the class and approved by all. The teacher facilitates consensus building if additional discussion/revision is needed.

Tips

Students are better prepared to engage in the development of rubrics if they have been exposed to the idea of rubrics their teacher created and have had practice using them for self-evaluation and monitoring their learning progress.

Sometimes it's helpful to see a high-quality example of an end product prior to the rubric creation. This may help the students uncover the criteria that influence their judgment . . . or perhaps the teacher might identify aspects of the work that should be evaluated to keep the discussion focused/supported. A fun way to summarize this activity is to have students summarize the final criteria by brainstorming a list of pitfalls or obstacles to be aware of and avoid in their own work.

Begin saving samples of student work now. Consider sharing with colleagues to speed the collection process and build a larger sample base.

If no appropriate authentic student examples are available, use teacher mock-ups in lieu of actual student work (or alter an actual student's work slightly).

Have at least one sample for each performance level (two to three are ideal).

Student-Developed Checklists

Description

The teacher and students develop a checklist of success criteria together, with the goal that students come to “own” the criteria. The teacher keeps the checklist-development discussion on track so that the result is appropriate and comprehensive, but still student owned.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

This strategy provides concrete illustration of the success criteria as they relate to the learning target. When learning new content, the success criteria can still be abstract for many learners (because the criteria are new).

When students feel ownership over the criteria, they are more likely to remember them as they are completing their own work, therefore getting to a higher quality of work with less need for revision.

This can assist them in self-assessment and monitoring their own learning, as well as in generating their own ideas of what they might do to improve.

Implementation

After the lesson has ended and the students have been given a task to complete, have them meet in small groups to create a list of what they think is important to include or do in the task (criteria). It may be helpful to remind the students that the criteria are also things that will be used to assess their work.

If possible, have small groups examine exemplars (high-quality examples) to find qualities that they have in common and to generate a list to share with the class for whole-group consensus.

Small groups can then present their lists to the whole class. Once all have presented, the teacher can facilitate a discussion about what was presented and what everyone agrees with, and then lead a conversation about each criterion that wasn't selected by every group. The members who presented the list can give their supporting reasons for a criterion, and others can present reasons they disagree, if applicable. Once the draft is created, students can vote for each criterion before it is added to the final checklist. After the class agrees on what qualities are present in all of the exemplars, the criteria can be translated into a checklist of success criteria to be used by students as they complete their own work.

Tips

Students are better prepared to engage in the development of checklists if they have been exposed to the idea of checklists their teacher created and have had practice using them for self-evaluation and monitoring.

Analyzing exemplars and using them to generate success criteria increase student engagement and ownership in the assessment process.

A fun way to bring this activity to a close is to have students summarize the final criteria by brainstorming a list of pitfalls or obstacles to be aware of and avoid in their own work.

Begin saving samples of student work now. Consider sharing with colleagues to speed the collection process and build a larger sample base. If no appropriate authentic student examples are available, use teacher mock-ups in lieu of actual student work (or alter an actual student's work slightly).

WALT and WILF

Description

The teacher uses “We Are Learning To” (WALT) and “What I Am Looking For” (WILF) to clarify learning targets and success criteria for his or her students. WALT refers specifically to the expected learning, whereas WILF refers to the success criteria (evidence of that learning).

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Helping students clarify the learning and what it looks like to be successful with these prompts also helps both students and teachers separate the learning (content) from the context and activity. It also prevents students from needing to ask “How good is good enough?”

Implementation

The teacher writes clear, valuable, and accessible WALT or WILF statements on the board or on a handout, makes purposive reference to them at the start of the lesson, and refers back to them during or at the end of the lesson, in a way that supports student learning.

TIB (“This Is Because”) is a great way to remind students of the purpose for the learning when introducing the lesson or summarizing at the end of the lesson.

Tips

These acronyms are especially useful for younger students as they begin to take some responsibility for their own learning. You can also add TIB as a way to help students see how a learning target fits in with things they have already done or will be doing next.

As with the sharing of learning targets, it is important not to confuse the expected learning described in WALT with the learning activities in which the students are engaging.

What-Why-How

Description

After sharing the lesson's learning target(s) with learners, the teacher uses think-pair-share to ensure learners understand the lesson's/task's purpose.

Promotes Learning/Informs Learning

Teachers use this think-pair-share to activate learners as instructional resources for each other to clarify learning targets.

Implementation

Use these questions to quickly check the clarity of both learning targets and success criteria:

- • What do you think you will be learning?
- • Why do you think the task is important?
- • How does it relate to prior learning?

If learners don't understand, make quick adjustments and clarifications before work continues.

Teachers hope that all learners can explain how or why an activity will help them learn. Posing these questions at any point during an activity activates learners' thinking about the purpose of the task they are engaged in. Learners describe what they are supposed to be learning and how the task they are engaged in will help them learn. Getting learners to understand the learning goal and purpose increases learner engagement.

Word Wall (Key Word Posters)

The teacher puts on the board or chart paper words, terms, or short phrases that are keys to talking about the content. These words or phrases (such as fractions, numbers, part, whole, equal, equivalent) should be helpful to students and intrinsic to discussing and thinking about the anticipated learning.

Description

Making words accessible to all students helps distinguish easily confused terms. Visual reminders frequently serve to jog students' memories about what they have learned.

This is a very supportive strategy for early readers, English Language Learners, or students with reading difficulties.

It is important for students to use content – or thinking-specific language (e.g., compare, solve, analyze) when possible to communicate clearly, demonstrate understanding, and build vocabulary.

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Implementation

The teacher might place these key words on the board/chart at the beginning of the school year, or the teacher might take a few minutes to do it as he or she explains the learning expectations for one of the first lessons of the year.

Tips

New words or phrases may be added as the topic and school year progress.

Some teachers display a few posters with frequently used terms that remain up all year and other posters that are specific to the content of the current unit of instruction, which are shared/posted during that unit only.

If words relate to the same aspect of a topic, consider color-coding those words.

