Clarifying, Understanding, and Sharing Learning Intentions and Criteria for Success

When students understand where they are going, they are better able to monitor their comprehension and work towards that destination.

What does this mean? Some dilemmas…

> Quality doesn't need to be defined. You understand it without definition. Quality is a direct experience independent of and prior to intellectual abstraction. (Pirsig, 1991, p. 64 as cited in Wiliam, 2011 p. 58)

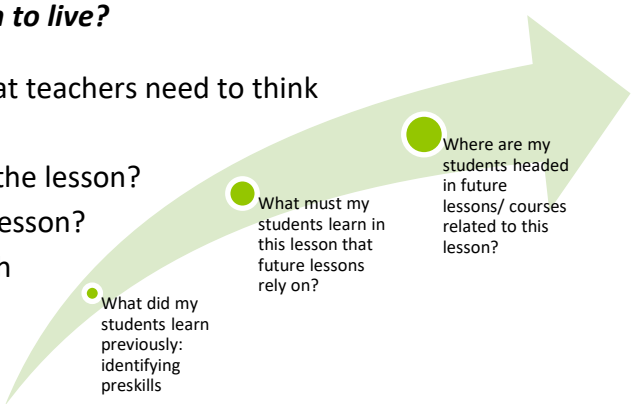
- Clarifying learning intentions is not the same as posting objectives or outcomes prior to lessons.
- Sometimes, you may want students to construct their own understanding of a specific idea. In this case is better to NOT post the outcome in advance.
- Sometimes, the essence of what you are hoping to learn is not easily communicated in one sentence on the board.

Designing Learning Targets

What is this lesson's reason to live?

Moss and Brookhart have identified the three things that teachers need to think about when planning for effective instruction (2011):

1. What are the essential knowledge and skills for the lesson?
2. What is the essential reasoning process for the lesson?
3. What is the potential learning trajectory in which the lesson is situated?



Rules or Maxims?

- Rules – defining expectations for format, structure
- Maxims – developing a "nose for quality" (Claxton, 1995 as cited in Wiliam, 2011, p. 58)
  When developing a vision for quality with students, some methods include:
  - Using rubrics outlines expectations
    - Clear statements of the level of knowledge or performance
    - The dimensions of what constitutes quality work
    - Commentaries describing quality that distinguishes each grade band

        - Most important – that students have time to make sense of what the expectations of quality are as outlined in the rubric
    - ❒ Co-constructing criteria (Gregory, Cameron, & Davies, 1997)
        - Brainstorm
        - Sort and categorize
        - Post criteria – make it visible
        - Revise and refine
    - ❒ Using writing (or other process) continuums (Davies, 2007)
        - Show range of possible ways to represent learning
        - Students can compare their work to samples
        - Students can develop criteria for quality from samples

Wiliam's Wisdom

- ➢ Develop the criteria with students, but have an idea going into the conversation about what your standards and expectations are as teacher. "This is not a democratic process".
- ➢ If we want to know exactly what we expect (the 'rules' for writing a lab report), then a task-specific rubric is useful. If we want students to transfer expectations for quality from task to task, then a generic rubric is useful.
- ➢ Break out the process criteria and product criteria as separate assessment items. Process criteria can help students become independent learners and 'own their learning' as it can show them how to break complex tasks into smaller, more manageable steps.
- ➢ Possible instructional strategies:
    - Students build test items with answer keys showing answers that would receive full marks.
    - Give opportunities for students to self assess and identify their 'best work', explaining why they have identified those examples.
    - Use a continuum of exemplars and have students identify why one example has been given a specific assessment label.

Works Cited

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Moss, C. M., & Brookhart, S. M. (2011). *Learning targets: Helping students aim for understanding today's lesson.* Alexandria: ASCD.

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