

Active Pedagogy: Using Effective Assessment Practices

Overview

Assessment practices in Expeditionary Learning classrooms drive instructional decisions and invite students into the assessment process. Teachers analyze student work and evidence of student thinking to understand learning and to shape instruction. Assessment practices help students understand, reflect on, and take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers and students collaborate to develop standards-based criteria for good work, and students learn to use explicit criteria to assess their progress and improve.



BENCHMARK 7:

USING EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

A. Using Multiple Assessments

1. Teachers practice ongoing assessment of student understanding by listening to evidence of student thinking and by posing probing questions.
2. Teachers focus on the thinking behind students' answers and not only on the answers themselves.
3. Teachers analyze student work to assess understanding and to evaluate and refocus instruction.
4. Teachers employ a variety of effort-based (e.g., performance assessments) and on-demand (e.g., writing to prompts) assessment strategies.
5. Teachers match the purpose and function of each assessment to learning targets (e.g., essays for critical thinking about content, multiple-choice tests for facts, and performance-based assessments for application of knowledge).
6. Teachers keep ongoing records to document student progress and guide instruction.

B. Reflection and Critique

1. Teachers and students generate criteria and build rubrics by examining exemplary models.
2. Rubrics are specific to particular products and assess content knowledge as well as presentation.
3. Students develop a common language for each discipline so they can pose revision questions, articulate goals, and give feedback.
4. Students use critique protocols to analyze the strength of their own work, learn from models, and provide feedback on the work of others.
5. Students reflect on their work: to examine improvement over successive drafts, to make sense of experiential learning, to think about their own learning, to analyze their interactions and collaborations, and to set goals for improvement.

C. Portfolios

1. The school establishes a portfolio system that includes working portfolios in major subject areas and master presentation portfolios.
2. The portfolio system has content requirements that align with learning expedition products and standards.
3. Working portfolios and master presentation portfolios show growth over time.
4. Portfolios include rubrics for major projects and assignments.
5. Students include multiple drafts and reflections to show how their work has improved and how they have met standards.

D. Preparation for High-Stakes Tests

1. Teachers help students analyze and practice the formats used on high-stakes tests (e.g., writing to prompts, multiple choice, and showing thinking in math and science).