

ONGOING ASSESSMENT: A FRAMEWORK FOR CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Helping Students Become Independent Learners

- **Make sure students know, understand, and can state the purpose of the instruction, task, activity.**
 - Ask, *Why are we doing what we're doing* (as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner, individually)?
 - State, write down, and project goals and objectives for and with students. (Later, check off what was accomplished during your celebration of what has been learned.)

- **Have students try out what you have been demonstrating.**
 - Implement shared and guided experiences (as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner) before expecting students to succeed on their own.
 - Provide opportunities for scaffolded conversations.
 - Provide and demonstrate how to use supportive resources.
 - Provide opportunities for differentiated instruction, learning, and follow-up activities.

- **Check (through oral statements or a written plan) that students are clear about what they are expected to do.**
 - Have students show their plan—brainstorming, outlining.
 - Have one or two students say back to you what students are expected to do.
 - If she or he cannot, have another student publicly make that statement as the first student listens carefully.
 - Have original student restate expectations.
 - Repeat if necessary.
 - Create a rubric together (based on demonstrations, shared writing, district and state requirements and standards).
 - For English language learners, write down expectations (for example, a language goal, a reading goal, and a writing goal) so students have a visual reference. Later, check off what has been accomplished.

- **Find out what students know before, during, and after the lesson.**

What's your evidence that students know such-and-such?

 - Ask questions that encourage response (so you hear all the voices and scaffold students' thinking). For example:
 - *Who sees something they know?* vs. *Who can spell (a specific word?)*

ONGOING ASSESSMENT, *continued*

- *What did you notice?* Use students' responses to gauge their understanding and guide your teaching, immersing, questioning, demonstrating, opportunities for talk. (You can also chart their responses and use the chart later to set expectations and as a reference for self-evaluation.)
 - *How did you know that?*
 - Show students their growing learning so they understand their knowledge is increasing. (Make visual aids, charts, lists. Add on to them/revise them as students learn more.)
 - Make learning comprehensible for English language learners through Total Physical Response, such as hand gestures and dramatizations.
 - Use turn-and-talk and partner and small-group discussions.
 - Have small self-directed groups appoint a scribe to record their thinking, and/or walk about as groups are working and observe and take notes. Have groups report how the group activity went.
 - Note and build in additional support and supplementary materials/scaffolds for special needs learners (gifted, ELLs, struggling).
- **Provide useful feedback to students.**
 - Confer with students regularly (roving check-ins, whole-class shares, one-on-one conferences).
 - Welcome and affirm approximations that show reasoned thinking.
 - Use language that is specific to the task. See pages 73–74 for some examples. (Avoid negative terms.)
 - **Collect and analyze evidence and data that students are progressing and meeting district benchmarks and state standards.**
 - Implement and analyze formative assessments, such as running records, informal reading and writing conferences, daily work samples, portfolios, self-assessments, worksheets created from class-authored shared writings.
 - Implement and analyze summative assessments, such as school and district assessments, state tests.
 - Use and value student self-assessments and self-evaluations.
 - Meet with grade-level and whole-school colleagues and—based on student work—notice what and where students are achieving well and where more attention is needed.
 - Use your data and analysis to set new goals and then plan for areas for intervention, professional development, and instructional changes.

ONGOING ASSESSMENT, *continued*

- **Observe and document whether students are applying their learning to new contexts.** Gather evidence that demonstrates that students can and do:
 - Transfer their learning and strategies across the curriculum.
 - Problem-solve independently to make meaning.
 - Explain their thinking.
 - Locate and use appropriate resources and strategies and apply them to unfamiliar contexts.
- Self-monitor, self-correct, self-check their work.
 - Use resources (such as word walls, classroom charts, manipulatives, and the library) to effectively make meaning.
 - Reread a text (in reading and writing).
 - Check with an excellent model and ask, *Is it right? How do I know? What can I do to find out?*
 - Edit independently.
- If students do not apply what has been demonstrated and practiced, go back to the Optimal Learning Model. Focus on demonstration and shared demonstration before releasing responsibility for the task(s) to students.
- **Notice and document if students are choosing to go on learning.**
Observe if students independently:
 - Choose to read/write more on the same or a related topic.
 - Monitor and improve the quality of their own work.
 - Set their own goals for continued learning.
 - Problem-solve confidently in new contexts, applying learned strategies.
 - Mentor and teach others.