

The School Effectiveness Framework 2008

Glossary

Accountable Talk is talk by students and their teacher that responds to and further develops what others in the classroom have said. It is focused, meaningful, and mutually beneficial to speaker and listener. Accountable talk stimulates higher-order thinking by requiring students to clarify their thinking, ask questions, test their hypotheses, learn to respect, listen actively and build on the ideas of others, and articulate their views and opinions constructively.

Achievement Targets

see Targets

Anchor Charts are co-created by teachers and students as a way to record thinking (e.g., about a text, problem or strategy) and make it visible for future reference and study. Anchor charts can also list procedures and processes for a particular activity (e.g., the stages of the writing process, the problem-solving process in mathematics). They help students clarify thinking, make connections and/or remember a specific skill, strategy or concept.

Assessment for Learning has a formative purpose, is ongoing and happens as part of the learning process. It is interactive between student and teacher, and among students. Feedback is provided to scaffold learning and based on relevant data so that the teaching-learning process can be adapted in order to meet the needs of students. Assessment tasks are crafted in order to open a window on what students know, do and understand. The insights that come from the process are used to design the next steps in instruction.

Assessment as Learning has a formative purpose and has as its ultimate goal students who are active, engaged and able to critically assess their own work. Assessment as learning helps students make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge and effectively apply their knowledge and skills. Over time, students move forward in their learning as they routinely ask questions for clarification, reflect on their work and make judgments about how to build on what they have done already.

Assessment of Learning has a summative purpose and is used near the end of a unit/term/course/year. This type of assessment is a collection of evidence used to evaluate each student's achievement of the curriculum expectations (according to the curriculum standards). It is used for reporting to students and parents/guardians.

Bansho originates from Japanese mathematics lessons. In Ontario classrooms, the term “bansho” has been used to represent a process where teachers co-ordinate discussions of students' mathematical thinking through a discussion that engages students in clarifying and justifying their solution methods. Teachers use visual aids (e.g., samples of student work on chart paper) to facilitate discussion that requires students to compare and synthesize different solution methods and identify relationships among them.

Big Ideas, sometimes referred to as “lifelong learnings” or “enduring understandings,” go beyond discrete facts, skills or easily forgotten fragments of knowledge to focus on larger concepts, principles or processes that develop over time and support students in future learning endeavours. The curriculum expectations and the instructional focus are the building blocks that deepen understanding of the big ideas.

Co-Create refers to a process involving teacher and students in developing tools, common understandings and strategies that support the teaching-learning process.

Common Board Assessments are used to collect, record and analyze the achievement of students across schools in order to identify and provide professional learning and resource supports. Examples of common board assessments are DRA, PM Benchmarks, CASI and board-created assessment tools in mathematics and literacy.

Co-teaching is an informal professional learning arrangement in which teachers with different knowledge, skills and talents have agreed to share responsibility for designing, implementing, monitoring and/or assessing a curriculum program for a class or group of students. Co-teaching makes it possible for teachers to engage in teaching as collaborative problem-solving.

Critical Literacy is a process of looking beyond the literal meaning of texts in order to analyze and evaluate the broader meaning and the author's intent. Critical literacy goes beyond conventional critical thinking because it focuses on issues related to fairness, equity and social justice. Students take a critical stance by asking what view of the world the text advances and by reflecting on their own perspective of the issues. Critical literacy is about empowering students to be active, informed and concerned citizens who think critically about societal issues and are willing to be solution finders.

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Criteria Charts clarify the required components/traits of a response, product and/or performance which demonstrate student learning.

Curriculum Mapping is a process for collecting, recording and aligning information about curriculum, assessment and instruction. The process helps teachers keep track of which clusters of expectations are being taught and assessed (and when), identify how instruction supports the intended learning in each grade and division and organize approaches to cross-curriculum learning that fosters student understanding of concepts, ideas and connections across many subject areas. It is a valuable tool for fostering professional conversation and learning.

Differentiating Instruction is based on the principle that students differ in their readiness, interests and learning styles, and instructional decisions regarding content, process and product will need to vary accordingly. Teachers use assessment data to identify students' learning strengths and needs in order to plan effective, meaningful learning experiences. Such assessment data can be gathered through observations, formal assessments and conversations with the student, family members and other educators.

Disaggregating Data refers to looking at assessment scores by specific sub-groups of students (e.g., ELL, students with special education needs, Aboriginal students or by gender) in order to identify trends and patterns that can be used to inform instructional practices.

ELL, the acronym for English language learners, refers to students whose first language is a language other than English, or is a variety of English that is significantly different from the language of instruction. ELLs may require focused educational supports to assist them in attaining proficiency in English.

Equity of Outcomes requires that educators utilize all the strategies within their repertoire to close achievement gaps between high-performing groups of students and those who are not achieving their potential. In a truly equitable system, factors such as race, gender or socio-economic status do not limit students from achieving ambitious outcomes or truncate their life chances. In fact barriers are removed as schools assume responsibility for creating the conditions to ensure success. The basic premise of equity is fairness and the belief in the moral imperative of schools to educate all children successfully. An equitable system, therefore, empowers all students to achieve. (See pp. 3 & 4 of this document for a full definition.)

Evidence-based strategies are what works in education – the “best practices” at the school and classroom level which result in successful outcomes for students. These powerful approaches to the teaching-learning process are supported by empirical research and/or inquiry and experiences in classrooms, schools and school boards that have been validated over time.

Exemplars are samples of authentic student work. They exemplify the intended quality of work as described by the assessment tool (i.e., rubric).

Expectations refer to the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn, demonstrate and apply by the end of every grade or course, as outlined in the Ontario curriculum.

Gradual Release of Responsibility entails the scaffolding of student learning through instruction that provides the appropriate amounts of support to students based on their individual needs until they can independently demonstrate the intended learning.

Higher-Order Thinking refers to the transformation of information and ideas that occurs when students combine facts and ideas and use them to synthesize, generalize, explain, hypothesize, or arrive at some conclusion or interpretation. By manipulating information and ideas through these processes, students are able to solve problems, acquire understanding and discover new meaning.

Inquiry-based Learning engages students in asking questions and problem solving to build knowledge.

Intervention refers to a range of instructional practices designed in response to student need (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional) to ensure that all students are able to access the intended learning and demonstrate achievement of the learning goal(s).

Joint Work is the collaborative development of innovative processes or strategies to address specifically defined goals based on student achievement needs. Joint work requires all team members to bring their expertise, experiences and knowledge to the table. All members contribute to the design of an approach that reflects the thinking of the entire team.

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Mathematical Processes refer to problem solving, reasoning and proving, reflecting, selecting tools and computational strategies, connecting, representing and communicating – the processes through which students acquire and apply mathematical knowledge and skills.

Mentor Texts are high-quality, well-written texts that can be used by teachers to introduce students to a strategy, literacy device and/or text feature. Students can refer to mentor texts when they need to remember how to apply or to recall the literacy device or text feature. Any text form can be a mentor text, as long as it is well crafted and meets the intended learning goals.

Metacognition is the process of thinking about one's own thought processes. Metacognitive skills include the ability to make sense of information and monitor one's own learning.

Networked Learning Communities are organized around a challenging focus and offer opportunities for joint work on issues that are larger than any one school can address alone. Principals, teachers and staff from a variety of schools work together to reconceptualize existing practices and structures, and make changes in order to improve student achievement.

Parallel Tasks are constructed to address the learning needs of all students by engaging them at their zone of proximal development and considering their learning styles. Tasks that vary in sophistication and/or complexity are constructed in order to enable students to access the learning goals and demonstrate achievement of the curriculum expectations.

Performance Tasks are authentic and meaningful, requiring students to create a response, product and/or performance in order to demonstrate knowledge and skills. An effective performance task requires higher-order thinking, involves inquiry as a way of constructing knowledge, relates to the categories of the achievement chart and overall expectations outlined in the provincial curriculum, makes connections across subject areas and relates classroom learning to the world beyond the classroom.

Problem Solving is as a higher-order cognitive process that requires students to use prior knowledge, curiosity and confidence to solve problems in unfamiliar situations. The most common problem-solving framework in education is George

Polya's four-step model which helps students think about a question or situation before, during and after the problem-solving experience. The Polya model includes: 1) understand the problem, 2) make a plan, 3) carry out the plan and 4) look back to check the reasonableness of the solution and conclusions resulting from the work.

Procedural Fluency is considered to be a characteristic of mathematical literacy. It involves the ability to carry out procedures (e.g., multiplication, addition) flexibly, accurately, efficiently and appropriately.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) is characterized by inquiry and collective effort to improve student learning. PLCs are relentless in challenging the status quo, seeking new methods to support student learning, testing those methods and then reflecting on the results; improvement, growth and renewal are its hallmarks. An example of an exemplary inquiry process in a PLC is teacher moderation where teachers work together to design assessment tasks and assess student work.

Portfolio is a collection of samples of student work selected by students, with teacher support, to track and demonstrate on an ongoing basis what they are learning. Teachers and students together assess the work in portfolios. Because students are asked to reflect on their learning in order to choose the samples that will go into the portfolios, portfolios are a powerful self-assessment tool.

Reciprocal Teaching is an instructional strategy used to support reading comprehension through the use of small, heterogeneous, peer-led groups whose mandate is to bring diverse perspectives and ideas to build knowledge and build consensus using the four strategies: predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarizing.

Reliability is the degree to which the results of an assessment are dependable and yield consistent results across raters ("inter-rater reliability"), over time ("test-retest reliability") or across different versions of the same test ("internal consistency reliability"). Reliability eliminates bias in scoring student work.

Rubric is an assessment tool that describes achievement levels for a process, product or performance. The power of a rubric is its clarity, providing students with a clear picture of what they are doing well, where they need to improve and what the next steps are in the intended learning process.

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Glossary (cont.)

Scaffolding is the provision of sufficient supports (e.g., learning strategies, guidance, resources) to promote learning. The “scaffolds” selected by the teacher are intended to help the student move to higher levels of achievement and transfer the responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student, thereby fostering independence. Scaffolding proceeds by determining the student’s zone of proximal development and designing adjustable support and guidance.

SMART Goals are ambitious goals that are: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound.

Staff is an inclusive term that includes administrators, teachers, support staff, everybody who interacts with students (e.g., ELL, Spec Ed, FI).

Student-led Conferences engage students in direct communication with their parents, peers and/or teacher through the use of portfolios illustrating their learning and achievement. Students take the lead in walking their audiences through a selection of accomplishments and demonstrations of their work. Student-led conferences bring students to the centre of classroom assessment.

Targets represent improvement in student learning. They are achieved by the focused efforts of staff, parents and students themselves. A wide variety of data are used to set the targets.

Teacher Moderation is a process for ensuring that student assessment results are reliable across classes and schools. The process engages teachers in conversation about the precision and reliability of their assessment tools (e.g., criteria charts, rubrics) and the validity of the task. It enables them to collect authentic student work that exemplifies the specified criteria (i.e., through the collection of task-specific exemplars). Teacher moderation promotes consistency and reliability in assessing student samples when measured against predetermined assessment criteria (e.g., rubrics). Through moderation, teachers examine student work to share beliefs and practices, enhance their understanding, compare their interpretations of student results and confirm and/or question their judgments about a student’s level of achievement.

Validity is an indication of how well an assessment measures what it was intended to measure (e.g., Does a test of laboratory skills really assess laboratory skills, or does it assess ability to read and follow instructions?). Teachers reflect

upon the task that was designed to measure specific expectations and its effectiveness in relation to the learning demonstrated by the students.

Word and Strategy Walls are large graphic organizers co-created by students and teacher to illustrate learning goals. They are prominently displayed, available for daily use by students and help teachers scaffold learning (e.g., content area words, high-frequency words).

Zone of Proximal Development is the student’s current level of achievement – it is what a student can do with assistance from teachers, peers and the environment. It involves joint work that moves the student to independent application of learning. If instruction is in a student’s zone of proximal development, new knowledge can be connected with prior knowledge and the student can be helped to deliver more complex and encompassing understanding. If instruction is below the zone of proximal development, the student does not gain new knowledge or understanding. If instruction is beyond the zone of proximal development, the student has insufficient prior knowledge to which new ideas can be connected.

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Notes