Peer Response 1

Jenn

Classroom assessment, simply put, is a way to evaluate what a student knows. Assessments can take many forms, including formal and informal. Whether the assessment is formal or informal, it is essential that they align with state standards and the objectives set. Assessments should also be conducted regularly to guide instruction and to also provide insight on how to differentiate instruction.  It is also important to note that the purpose of assessments should be to show what students know, not what they do not. Angelo & Cross (2010) state “Classroom assessment is an approach designed to help teachers find out what students are learning in the classroom and how well they are learning it.” In a sense, anyone should be able to look at an assessment and know what the students are learning. If not, the assessment is not reliable nor valid and should be redesigned so that it does reflect the current content.

            There are a variety of assessments, some of which include: pre-assessments, formative, summative, norm-referenced, and criterion-referenced. Assessments can take the forms of checklists, rubrics, multiple choice tests, oral exams, projects, and concept maps. In a classroom that addresses varied learning preferences, a variety of assessment types will be highlighted and available for student use. Summative assessments seem to be the most popular form of analyzing student performance, however, the intent is not always clear. “The task of assessing pupils summatively for external purposes is clearly different from the task of assessing ongoing work to monitor and improve progress. Some argue that these two roles are so different that they should be kept apart. However, teachers clearly face difficult problems in reconciling their formative and summative roles, and confusion in teachers' minds between these roles can impede the improvement of practice, (Black & Wiliam, 2005 p.148). This highlights the importance knowing the role the assessment given is intended for.

       I am an English Language Learner educator and so the assessments I utilize focus on the different components of language-speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is also essential to know that I work with preschool aged students. The majority of assessments I use are made by myself as there are not many standards based assessments for preschool aged students. I utilize WIDA’s “Can do” statements when designing assessments which creates different tiers for student abilities. I utilize weekly checklists where I document language output and the quality of the output. I will also use a pre-assessment prior to beginning a thematic unit that gauges prior background knowledge, vocabulary, and skill readiness. The same assessment is administered upon completion of the unit to document growth.

            I also utilize a state created assessment designed for preschool aged ELL students called the Pre-LAS. This is used when I push into classrooms weekly and observe if and how the students are applying the skills they develop with myself in the regular education classroom. This provides insight on how to develop lessons that are more aligned to each student’s specific needs. It can be challenging creating assessments that are appropriate for the age of the student’s I work with (3-5), in that acquiring a second language is influenced and seen constantly throughout the day. I am continually reflecting and researching ways preschool aged students can demonstrate what they know through reading and writing. If students can sort pictures or sequence events of a story covered in class, which is demonstrating reading. When students draw predictions, a character from a story, or attempts to label a diagram; that is demonstrating a form of writing.  A fun and interactive assessment that I have recently started using is called “Assessing skill in synthesis and creativity.” In short, this assessment is conducted by asking students to answer the questions “Who does what to whom, when, where, how, and why?” about a given topic and then to synthesize those answers into a single summary sentence, (Angelo & Cross, 2010). In a sense, this is teaching the students how to chunk information and how to summarize information while developing their oral language abilities too.

Reference

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Peer Response 2

Jamie

Classroom assessment is the means by which we gauge student learning. It takes the form of both formative and summative work. It can be formal (test, paper, project, written response) or informal (discussion, group work, class activity). John Hatti (2007) explained that formative assessment is important to student learning because it clearly communicates to students what they can and cannot do in relation to their learning goals. It also provides teachers a greater understanding of their students’ progress (as cited in Rothman, 2018, p. 5).  Formative assessment is used to gauge student learning throughout the learning process. Teachers can use this information to inform their teaching practices in regards to content and delivery. If students are performing well on an individual component, then the class is ready to move forward; contrarily, if students are not performing well on formative assessments, then teachers can respond by reteaching or approaching the concepts differently. Summative assessments measure student’s skills after teaching has occurred. These are normally formal in nature and may be common assessments or teacher created. Summative assessments also indicate student mastery levels and identify areas of strength and need. They should be used to determine next steps. They can also be used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of a teacher’s pedagogy.

Classroom assessments take many forms. Formal assessments are often tests, quizzes, papers, and projects, “But teachers can also gather evidence informally, by asking students to explain what they know and how they know it. Some teachers use low technology tools like green, yellow, and red cups that students use to indicate whether they understand, have questions, or do not understand” (Rothman, 2018, p. 6). As Hattie and Timperley (2007) assert, the most important component of assessment, especially formative assessment, is feedback due to its impact on student learning. Feedback takes the form of scores, written commentary, and verbal responses. Teachers can help students to understand their own learning, emphasizing how to be more successful or celebrating successes.

In designing my own classroom assessment, I utilize a backward construction model. I start by identifying the skills and standards that I need my students to master, how long I have to teach the unit, and what materials are at my disposal. From there, I determine which methods would best demonstrate student learning. For example, in a recent novel unit, I determined that the skills that we needed to assess were reading comprehension and literary analysis with a particular emphasis on figurative language and diction. We read *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston. In designing assessments, we (my team) created a number of in-class writing assignments that mirror AP Literature tests and reading comprehension quizzes. These were used throughout the unit as formal formative assessments. In-class activities such as discussion, group work, and application activities were used as informal formative assessments. The summative assessments were a test (multiple choice, matching, and short answer) and a group analysis project with a presentation component. We determined the form of the summative assessments at the beginning of the unit. Then we created the group analysis project and formative assessments. Lastly, we created the test based on the learning that actually took place in the classroom. Novels can be analyzed in more than one way, so we wait to create the test in order to allow for flexibility during the class discussions and activities.

Each time I give a classroom assessment, I reflect upon its effectiveness thereafter and note changes that need to be made. In this case, the project worked out extremely well, with students demonstrating their understanding clearly and utilizing analysis skills. The test needs some editing, especially in regards to the multiple choice selections. Some of the questions were interpreted differently than we intended, so student feedback will guide our editing efforts. We create assessments as course teams, so it is a collaborative process. This helps to meet the needs of all students and to provide a common benchmark. We share ideas and work together to create common assessments, though the formative assessments may be different. I think that the overall design process is quite effective. The assessments measure the skills that students need to learn in an appropriate manner. Though there are arguments against tests in the form of multiple choice, we write questions of different difficulty levels based on Norman Webb’s Depths of Knowledge. We also use different types of questions such as matching and short answer. I find that test writing is one of the greatest challenges, in large part because it is a challenge to write a set of questions that can be answered in a short period of time that accurately assesses students’ knowledge and skills. This is why I prefer at least two summative assessments of different forms for each unit.

References

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