



The New Report Card: A Shift in Pedagogy

From Knowledge and Content to Processes and Skills

When the work began around building a new division-wide report card, it quickly became apparent that the group saw a need to make the report card more reflective of the processes involved with learning, and the purposes for learning. The intention was to continue to move away from memorizing the glossary definition of the particle model, or the parts of speech, or the historical dates of the industrial revolution as isolated bits of knowledge, and to start focusing more on the big ideas around the knowledge and how this knowledge can be acquired and used. We want students to be able to ask important questions, investigate possible solutions, solve problems, collaborate with peers, communicate clearly and artistically, interpret messages, be critical about information...the list goes on. There are things that students need to have at their fingertips to be able to exercise higher order thinking skills, but it is through that exercise that students deepen their knowledge base, form connections with other things they are learning, and find the meaning in the information we are asking them to learn.

From Grades to Descriptors

Traditionally, letter grades and percentages were reflective of the knowledge outcomes from the programs of study, whereas descriptors incorporate skills and attitudes outcomes as well. The descriptors differentiate based on the kind of support a student needs to achieve, as well as how they are able to work with information. Think of people you know who are incredibly competent at what they do. They are able to exercise their initiative and their creativity to respond to challenging, non-routine situations. They know how to seek out resources, be it in the form of a person, or a text, or an image, or a sound byte. They understand the importance of sharing what they know, and they want to learn from others. They also know that mistakes and failures are an important part of the learning process, rather than a black mark against their record. They are comfortable in finding a way that works for them, even though it might not be the traditional method.

From Closed to Open Questions

There is tremendous value in the thought processes students are sharing. Observe with eyes wide open, and hear everything students have to say. Sometimes we look for a particular response, and filter out the rest. The assessment tasks need to be open enough for students to be able to enter in, to show what they can do, and then, in dialoguing with someone who understands what they are thinking, to grow.