



What is self-assessment?

Student self-assessment has been shown to raise student achievement and promote a sense of ownership in the learning process (Black & William, 1998; Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002; Rolheiser & Ross, 2001). According to a review of the self-assessment literature, students who engaged in the process of self-assessment strategies demonstrated improved academic performance across different grade levels and subject areas (Brown & Harris, 2014). When students self-assess, they gather information about and reflect on their own learning.

Teachers can work with students to help them consider their progress in developing certain skills, knowledge, processes, and attitudes. Then, students can use that information to determine where they are in relation to the learning goal and the actions they need to take to close the gap between their current understanding and the learning goal.

Student self-assessment defined

Student self-assessment can be defined as the process in which students gather information about and reflect on their own learning in relation to a learning goal. This process involves three parts in which students:

- (1) recognize and understand the desired learning goal,
- (2) monitor and evaluate the quality of their thinking and performance to gather evidence about their current position in relation to the learning goal, and
- (3) acquire the understanding, strategies, and skills to close the gap between their current position and the desired performance.

This three-part definition helps to provide clarity for the different areas of skill and understanding that the teacher needs to address to effectively support students to engage in self-assessment.

Applications to practice

Self-assessment is an essential element of the formative assessment process. When a teacher explicitly teaches students to effectively self-assess, students become empowered to set their own goals for learning, take ownership of their learning, and take action to close the gap between the two to achieve their goals. Students need ongoing feedback, support, and practice throughout this learning process.

There are several steps a teacher can take to establish processes and routines that support students to engage in self-assessment. It is important for the teacher to foster a supportive learning culture in the classroom so that students are comfortable engaging in self-assessment. The teacher can provide clear expectations on how students can objectively look at their work in comparison to specific criteria. Students are often overly critical or overly optimistic about their performance, so the teacher can help students develop an accurate self-assessment of their work by looking for specific indicators of the success criteria to meet the learning goal. This criteria is helpful for students to use as they review their own work.

The more students have learned to give and receive formative feedback that is aligned to success criteria, the better prepared they are to self-assess. Through both self- and peer assessment, students learn how to monitor their progress toward goals and take action to move their learning forward.

Teaching self-assessment to students requires attention to five aspects:

- Ensure students understand the success criteria to clarify what they will use when assessing their learning.
- Model how to use the success criteria to assess student work.
- Provide opportunities for students to use the criteria to assess their own work.
- Talk with students about what went well and what could be improved in assessing their learning.
- Help students to use the information from self-assessment to clarify next steps in their learning and to develop individual learning goals.

Steps for implementing self-assessment are highlighted in Table 1.

Teachers can also help students develop as self-assessors by modeling self-assessment in the classroom. The teacher or students may show examples of work and share their self-assessment about the work in comparison to a learning target or specific criteria. The teacher will need to further prepare students to engage in self-assessment by:

- defining self-assessment in student-friendly language;
- discussing why it is important for their learning; and
- clarifying the learning targets and success criteria they will use to assess their knowledge, skills, or performance.

The teacher will need to support students to use the information they gather from self-assessment to inform their work as they close the gap between their current

understanding or performance and the desired learning goal. Students benefit from opportunities to reflect on their self-assessment as they internalize what constitutes quality work and their own individual strengths and areas for growth. They can do this by revising their work, writing in a journal, or sharing with a peer. Often the teacher will have students keep a notebook to record their goals, progress, and new strategies they are using.

This is an iterative process that develops over the course of the school year. Students will need ample practice, with opportunities to debrief, ask questions, and share about challenges and successes. Self-assessment will also look different in different content areas and for different assignments, so teachers will need to think about when and how it will be most valuable for students to engage in self-assessment.

It is helpful for students and teachers to begin small with self-assessment, and to develop skills over time with practice. When teachers provide consistent and ongoing opportunities for self-assessment, students become familiar with the process, take ownership of their learning, and gain confidence in themselves as learners.

“Peer and self-assessment help students gain confidence in themselves as learners and promote student engagement and learning”
(Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Table 1: Implementing Self-Assessment

<p>1. PREPARE: Prepare students to engage in self-assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create a class culture where reflection and growth are valued. ■ Define self-assessment in student-friendly language, and explain why it may be helpful for their learning. ■ Ensure the learning target and success criteria are presented/co-created and discussed so that students have a clear understanding of the expectations for performance that they will use to assess their work.
<p>2. GUIDANCE: Provide rubrics, guidelines, or other criteria to guide students as they assess their own work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide rubrics, checklists, or visual anchor charts, along with clearly defined tasks to guide self-assessment.
<p>3. MODEL and TEACH the PROCESS: Model and explicitly teach the process of self-assessment with students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Model self-assessment and metacognition by doing a “think-aloud” in which the teacher demonstrates the internal thinking involved in self-assessment using a particular learning target and performance or work sample.
<p>4. PRACTICE Facilitate opportunities for students to practice, engage in self-assessment, and receive feedback on the process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scaffold student learning by allowing them to practice one step at a time, and provide feedback so students are aware of what went well and what may need to be improved.
<p>5. REFLECT and SUPPORT: Ensure students have time to reflect on their self-assessment and use it to improve their skills and/or work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide opportunities for students to revise their work and set goals for future learning based on their self-assessment.

TO LEARN MORE

Learning Point: **What do we mean by formative assessment?**

Michigan Assessment Consortium, 2016.

<http://bit.ly/LP-FormativeAssessment>

Promoting learning and achievement through self-assessment

by Heidi Andrade & Anna Valtcheva. *Theory into Practice*. 48, 12-19.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840802577544>

Student Self-Assessment. Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat: Capacity Building Series (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/studentselfassessment.pdf>

Student Self-Assessment: The Key to Stronger Student Motivation and Higher Achievement. James McMillan & Jessica Hearn. *Educational Horizons*, Fall 2008, p 40-49.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ815370.pdf>

References

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Brown, G., & Harris, L. R. (2014). The future of self-assessment in classroom practice: Reframing self-assessment as a core competency.

Chappuis, S., & Stiggins, R. J. (2002). Classroom assessment for learning. *Educational leadership*, 60(1), 40-44.

Rolheiser, C., & Ross, J. A. (2001). Student self-evaluation: What research says and what practice shows. *Plain talk about kids*, 43, 57.

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