Promoting Assessment as Learning in the Development of Writing Skills (Secondary 4-6)

Introduction

This example focuses on how assessment as learning can be built on the good practice of assessment for learning and implemented in schools to improve students’ writing performance. It illustrates how the teacher supports students in acquiring and applying a range of metacognitive skills and engages them in reviewing and improving their writing skills through:

- appreciation of good sample student work;
- self-reflection and goal-setting;
- self-monitoring of learning progress; and
- self-evaluation.

Planning Stage

- The following assessment practices have been adopted in a secondary school to create a favourable environment conducive to promoting “assessment as learning” prior to the tryout:
  - students are engaged in conducting peer-assessment regularly in writing and speaking tasks to develop the habit of reflection;
  - success criteria for all writing tasks are shared with students to familiarise them with the assessment objectives; and
  - timely and quality feedback, as well as concrete suggestions for improvement, is provided by teachers in each writing task to help students understand their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as how to improve their writing.

- The implementation period was strategically set between two school terms to provide opportunities for students to review their writing in Term 1 to set goals for Term 2. The period spanned throughout the second term and involved three pieces of writing to allow ample time for students to practise applying the metacognitive skills to monitor their progress in writing.
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Learning and Teaching Process

Part 1: Appreciation of Good Sample Student Work, Self-reflection and Goal-setting

The teacher
- selects good sample student writing and explains the strengths with textual evidence; and
- demonstrates, through thinking aloud, how to appreciate good writing by focusing on the best parts on the following:
  - content (e.g. presentation of arguments with supporting details and examples, giving precise background information)
  - organisation (e.g. using eye-catching and specific sub-headings, using effective topic and concluding sentences); and
  - language and style (e.g. using rhetorical questions to enhance presentation, using persuasive language)

- Students are motivated to read and learn from the outstanding writing by their peers in a supportive learning environment.
- Students develop their language and critical thinking skills through appreciating and analysing the outstanding writing in terms of content, organisation, and language and style.
- Students learn metacognitive skills through teacher’s demonstration in the learning process.

![Sample Student Work for Appreciation](#)
The teacher

- guides students to review their own writing assignments completed in the previous term and the teacher’s feedback;
- helps students reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in writing and identify their learning needs;
- supports students to formulate personalised learning goals on content, organisation, and language and style and propose possible actions for each; and
- provides constructive feedback for students on the appropriateness of the learning goals and the feasibility of the proposed actions to facilitate their revision of learning goals and actions.

Students take greater ownership over their own learning as they identify their own learning needs and plan actions for making improvement.

Students develop and practise their metacognitive skills through expressing their thoughts and analysis in writing and revising their plans to incorporate feedback from the teacher.
Part 2: Self-evaluation during the Learning Process

Throughout the three pieces of writing, the teacher
• encourages students to focus on their personalised learning goals, step up their efforts and take actions to attain them in the pre- and while-writing stages;
• provides opportunities for students to evaluate their attainment of learning goals and the effectiveness of their proposed actions with the use of a progression chart in the post-writing stage; and
• supports students to formulate further actions necessary for improving their writing skills.

Self-directed learning takes place when students keep track of their progress throughout the three writing tasks.
• The use of graphic organisers helps students visualise their evaluation of the attainment of learning goals and the effectiveness of the proposed actions.
Part 3: Overall Evaluation

The teacher

- guides students to evaluate their overall attainment of learning goals and the effectiveness of their actions, and reflect on problems encountered and actions taken to overcome them.
- provides constructive feedback for students to plan for further actions to make improvement.

- Students develop the skills and confidence in assessing their own strengths and weaknesses and a positive attitude towards improving their language skills.
- A growth mindset, which advocates that success can be achieved through making appropriate efforts, is promoted among students to empower them to take the initiative to improve their own learning.

Some of the activities have been tried out in St Mark’s School. We thank the school for sharing their experience.