

ASSESSING AND REPORTING ON HABITS OF MIND

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PREFACE TO BOOK 3

ARTHUR L. COSTA AND BENA KALLICK

What can educators look for to indicate that their students are progressing in their use of the habits of mind? Who needs to know about students' growth in the habits? And how should students' progress and growth be communicated? This is the stuff that Book 3, *Assessing and Reporting on Habits of Mind*, is made of.

Please note that throughout this book, we purposely avoid using the phrase "mastering the habits of mind." We believe no one ever fully masters the habits. We've not yet found the world's perfect listener or someone who persists in all endeavors or anyone who consistently manages personal impulsivity under high emotional stress. In assessing for and reporting about the habits of mind, we look for indicators of progress and growth, not some ultimate point of mastery.

Chapter 1 begins with descriptions of what educators and parents might hear students saying, or see them doing, as they improve their use of the habits of mind. This chapter addresses general indicators for each of the 16 habits. You will want to add to these lists to reflect the context and character of your students and school.

Chapter 2 invites staff members and students to dedicate themselves to enhanced learning through reflection. David Perkins (1995) believes that the capacity to learn from reflection is in itself a form of intelligence. Taking time to reflect may seem nearly impossible in our fast-paced, frenetic lives, but we offer many suggestions for helping students and staff members get into the habit of reflecting as a way of making greater meaning of their day-to-day experiences.

Because dispositions cannot be measured with product-oriented tools, Chapter 3 describes a variety of assessment techniques for the habits of mind. This chapter includes many practical examples from teachers and schools that have developed, tested, and refined these assessment tools. Chapter 3 also introduces the concept of the feedback spiral as a frame for observing and measuring continuous growth and learning.

Keep in mind that school staffs should share findings and systematically record indicators of growth over time. Such records provide feedback to staff, students, parents, school board members, and the community. Examining this accumulated information together encourages staff members to take pride in their accomplishments. Reflection can also highlight behaviors that need further cultivation, and it can ground decision making about allocating time and energy to refine assessment practices.

In Chapter 4, Steve Seidel demonstrates the power of reflective conversations. He describes a series of focused meetings where teachers looked at a single piece of student work for an extended time. The protocol they followed might serve as a springboard for similar rich reflections in your school or district.

Parents, staff members, and the community will find their perceptions about schooling transformed when they realize that the school's goals are to engage and enhance habits of mind rather than just convey traditional content. Chapter 5 contains suggestions for what to report, how to report it, and to whom information about the habits of mind should be reported.

The ultimate purpose of assessment is to guide students to become self-managing, self-monitoring, self-modifying, and self-assessing. We've missed the whole point of education if students graduate from school still dependent on others to tell them that their answers are right, their products are adequate, or their behavior is admirable. In Chapter 6, Steven Levy humorously—and pointedly—describes the patience and persistence required by a teacher intent on helping his students overcome their learned dependence on others.

In Chapter 7, Jodi Bongard and Judy Lemmel describe how they engaged parents in establishing a communication system that informs about students' progress in the habits of mind and also instructs in ways to support the habits at home.

We end Book 3 with a chapter on how to begin a schoolwide assessment program that guides students to be self-evaluative. Chapter 8 also describes ways to provide staff members with data to energize their curriculum and instructional decision making—and to support celebrations of their success!

REFERENCE

Perkins, D. (1995). *Outsmarting IQ: The emerging science of learnable intelligence*. New York: The Free Press.

From the Editors: Throughout the book, student names are fictitious.

DEFINING INDICATORS OF ACHIEVEMENT

ARTHUR L. COSTA AND BENA KALLICK

*How much do students really love to learn, to persist, to passionately attack
a problem or a task?*

. . . to watch some of their prized ideas explode and to start anew?

. . . to go beyond being merely dutiful or long-winded?

Let us assess such things.

Grant Wiggins

We are more likely to observe indicators of achievement if we first take the time to specifically define those indicators. What kinds of evidence show that students are acquiring the habits of mind? This chapter contains general descriptions of indicators that show students are acquiring, internalizing, and applying the habits of mind.

The habits of mind truly take on meaning when they are defined in the context of day-to-day classroom life. Thus, teachers will want to consider indicators for themselves first, then expand their consideration to include students, colleagues, parents, and perhaps even other community members. The habits should be described in terms of the content being taught, and they should be explained within the context of a particular classroom's characteristics. Although the habits need to be considered within these parameters, we suggest using the following general indicators as starting points to decide what to look for when you use the feedback and assessment strategies described in Chapters 2 through 8.