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1. Self-Assessment

What does self-assessment look like?

There are many ways students can assess their own work. Students are involved in self-assessment when, for example, they:

- talk with a teacher about a science project, explaining what it is they are trying to do
- tell a partner how they arrived at an answer in mathematics
- write in a response log at the end of the class, recording key points they have learned and questions they still have
- select, according to criteria, a particular piece of writing to be placed in a portfolio
- summarise in their quiz book what they need to study for the next quiz

Some self-assessment activities take a few minutes for students to complete while others are more complex and involve a variety of steps. In this book we have organised self-assessment activities under three headings:

- **Pause and Think.** Students assess their work by taking a few minutes to pause and think or reflect about what they are learning.
- **Look for Proof.** Students go one step beyond pause-and-think activities; they select a work sample as proof of an aspect of their learning and comment about their work.
- **Connect to Criteria.** Students assess their work in relation to criteria that have been set for a task or project and find evidence to show they have met the criteria.

How does self-assessment support student learning?

When students assess themselves they *develop insights* into their own learning. Rather than relying on feedback from one person – their teacher – and asking “Is this right?” “Is this long enough?” “Am I doing it right?” and “Is this what you want?” students begin to *monitor* their own learning and consider what part of the assignment meets the criteria and what needs more attention.

When students are involved in self-assessment, they provide themselves with regular and immediate *descriptive feedback* to guide their learning. They become more actively involved in a curriculum that otherwise can seem unrelated to their lives and personal experiences.

How does student self-assessment support teachers?

When students are involved in self-assessment, their teachers can see the gaps between what they have taught and what students have learned. By collecting students’ self-assessments, teachers enrich the depth and variety of their data collections about student learning. Teachers go beyond looking at the products and include the students’ thinking about their own learning as a key part of their collection of information.

In addition, when teachers provide time for students to assess their own learning on a regular basis, students have time to process new information. Providing time for students to *pause and think*, to *look for proof*, and to *connect to criteria* allows teachers to slow down the pace of their teaching to match the speed of student learning. Students have the opportunity to think about and consolidate their learning before moving on to another topic and covering more curriculum material.

Pause-and-Think activities

In this section, we describe three self-assessment activities that require students to pause and think about their own learning. Each activity is brief, engaging and requires little teacher preparation. The activities are designed to:

- help students begin to develop skills in thinking about their own learning
- provide teachers with information so they can find any gaps between what has been taught and what has been learned, and
- give students processing time so they can begin to make sense of new material and information

PHRASES AND PROMPTS

Students complete sentence starters that encourage them to think about what they are learning.

Introduce the purpose to students:

It is important to stop once in a while and pause and think about what you are learning. When you pause and think you give your brain time to process – to make sense – of the new ideas. I am going to set aside time for you to do these activities in class.

The context for this example is watching a video in class.

1. After students have watched a video, record two phrases on the board: “The part I like the best” and “The part I didn’t like.”
2. Ask volunteers to respond orally to one of these phrases.
3. Have students write responses to one or both phrases in their notebooks.
4. Provide students time to share responses orally with partners.

Provide opportunities for practice:

- Ask students to select phrases from a classroom chart (see figure 1) and use them as sentence starters.
- Have students set up and use a pause-and-think notebook (see figure 2) where they have previously recorded a different prompt on each page. They can select any one of these prompts to respond to when asked.



Figure 1: Classroom chart

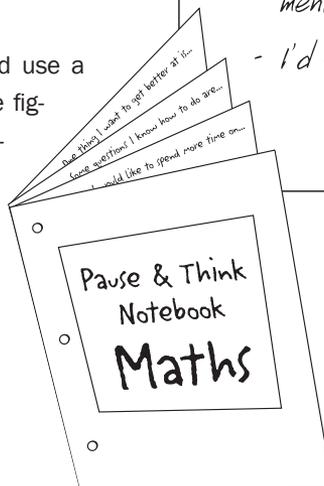


Figure 2:
Pause-and-Think
notebook