Facilitation Guide for a Peer Learning Community and Book Study Focused on Performance Assessments

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide educational leaders with resources and materials to aid in the facilitation of a Peer Learning Community (PLC) centered around a book study of _Designing Authentic Performance Tasks and Projects_. Members of the Agency of Education's (AOE) Proficiency-Based Learning Team facilitated such a PLC, the goal of which was to develop a shared understanding of the uses and benefits of performance assessments as they relate to equity, student engagement, and authenticity. Participants gained a deeper understanding of the power of performance assessments and came away with practical tools and strategies for implementing performance assessments in their practice.

Introduction

Background

According to the Education Quality Standards, "Each supervisory union shall develop, and each school shall implement, a local comprehensive assessment system that employs a balance of assessment types, including but not limited to, teacher- or student-designed assessments, portfolios, performances, exhibitions and projects" (EQS 2123.2). In Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems (LCAS) convenings held by AOE staff, facilitators learned that, while there is evidence of benchmark and diagnostic testing related to ELA and math (especially in the elementary grades), Supervisory Unions and School Districts' (SU/SDs) LCAS are weaker in other content areas and do not often include performance assessments. Additionally, state data indicate that there are apparent gaps in knowledge between students who have been historically marginalized and their peers. Performance-based assessments help teachers "ensure equity by providing the appropriate degree of challenge and instructional supports suited to the needs and talents of _all_ of their students" (McTighe et al., 2020, p. 120) and create an opportunity to "customize tasks in a manageable fashion so that every learner is engaged and supported" (p. 141). The inclusion of performance assessments in LCAS enables teachers to incorporate culturally sustaining practices into their assessment of student learning.

> Performance assessments center students' identity and experiences by asking them to show what they know and can do through multidisciplinary projects, presentations of their learning in front of a panel, and reflections on their educational trajectory. At their core, such assessments provide a critical space for students to reflect on and share their personal stories and their identities as learners. (Keeping Students at the Center with Culturally Relevant Performance Assessments)

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Additionally, integrating multi- and transdisciplinary assessments into their LCAS will help SU/SDs better prepare their students for life after high school, as "most issues and problems in the world beyond the classroom are not contained within a single, subject-specific silo; they naturally involve the application of knowledge and skills from more than one discipline and often include the application of transdisciplinary, 21st century skills such as critical and creative thinking, collaboration, and communication" (McTighe et al., p. 41).

Developing Materials, Resources, and Structure

Members of the AOE's Proficiency-Based Learning Team chose the book [Designing Authentic Performance Tasks and Projects,](#) by Jay McTighe, Kristina J. Doubet, and Eric M. Carbaugh, based on research into previous work done by McTighe around performance assessments. The book provides educators with examples and resources designed to ensure deep learning that can transfer beyond the classroom by incorporating authentic performance tasks and projects into their curriculum. Facilitators found the book to be an invaluable resource, and participants agreed, with 100% responding that they found the book helpful. One participant explained that "there was so much information. The book has a rich supply of strategies and research. I will continue to use it, as I work with other educators to support meaningful PBL coursework for students."

When planning out delivery of a professional learning experience, it is important to think about what should be covered and how much time to spend on each topic. Since the book has eight content-rich chapters and the goal was to conduct the PLC over a series of four 90-minute sessions, the book was divided into two chapters per session. This proved to still be too much content to cover, so facilitators had to be selective about the topics on which each session would focus within the two chapters.

In developing materials, it is important to consider the needs of the audience. Including examples is one way to show theory in practice, and while the book includes a number of examples, any sample of actual teacher and student work goes a long way. Additionally, such examples and samples should span all content areas and grade bands of teachers in the PLC, including special education and considerations made for different types of learners.

Response from Participants

Based on data collected in an exit survey, 100% of participants found the PLC to be a valuable learning experience. One participant noted, "I have been energized by the idea (with evidence that backs it up) of creating tasks and assessments that are more performance based. This course has given me more confidence in creating them - and a book to make them more beneficial and worthwhile to my students." Another participant reported, "I gained a much better idea of how performance assessment works and how to implement them in my instructional plans. The templates fit nicely into what I want to do next year. I'm already using some of these models in my planning." All in all, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, indicating a PLC such as this is meeting a need in the educator community.

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Framework for Delivery

The section below outlines a framework for each session. Each delivery framework document, linked at the end of this section, includes the following:

Connections to LCAS Performance Indicators

Each of the four sessions focused on one or more of the performance indicators (PIs) from the Local Comprehensive Assessment System Quality Criteria Single Point Rubric. These include: a Clear Vision for Teaching and Learning; Design for Rigor; Assessment Inventory; Assessment Literacy; Personalized Learning Plans; and a Culture of High Expectations

Suggestions for Activities

This facilitation guide provides a list of suggested activities for each session. This includes a description of the activity, accompanying discussion prompts and questions, and links to important resources, including the slide deck used in facilitation (which is saved as a PowerPoint file so facilitators can edit it to meet the needs of their audience).

Other Topics to Consider

This book contains far more information and resources than can be covered during four 90-minute sessions, so the guide includes a list of other topics facilitators may want to consider, organized by chapter.

Supporting Resources

This includes links to any other resources used in the development of the session. Links to all relevant resources can also be accessed by joining the Performance Assessment Book Study PLC group on Edmodo. Educators who have not already done so can activate their Edmodo account and join the VTED Learns community by filling out this form. Then, they can join the group using the join link or the group code, e94sxv.

Reflection Questions

This guide includes session-specific reflection questions facilitators can use to adapt and apply this PLC to their context.

Delivery Frameworks by Session

- Session 1 – Chapters 1 and 2
- Session 2 – Chapters 3 and 4
- Session 3 – Chapters 5 and 6
- Session 4 – Chapters 7 and 8

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