

Designing Effective Projects: Assessing Projects

Assessing Secondary Project

A Secondary Assessment Plan

Project Background

A high school English teacher is beginning a new novel. To meet the language arts objective, students must determine each character's traits by what the characters say about themselves in narration and dialogue. Using this standard, the teacher creates a project that integrates technology and introduces it to his students. Students are first presented the scenario that this book is soon to become a movie. They are being asked by top movie producers to create a "movie" soundtrack based on what they know about what the characters say and do in the book. The students are required to choose the character traits that best represent each character and specific examples that support these traits. These ideas are assembled into a multimedia presentation and shared with other class members for feedback. Students then choose three songs that represent these characters and build evidence based upon their reading to support the use of these songs.

Assessment Planning

The teacher creates a rubric to assess student learning and shares it with the class after the scenario is presented. Each student in the class receives a copy of the rubric, and the teacher explains the scoring system, expectations, and requirements for each level on the rubric. The rubric is accompanied by a checklist of project requirements. Exemplary student work samples are also shared and discussed with the class. The students ask clarifying questions, and the teacher asks specific questions about the project to check for understanding. Once students are aware of project expectations, they begin the work.

Along the way, students prioritize tasks with a timeline and are expected to get peer feedback at pivotal points. There are also specific teacher check points to ensure students are on the right track and allow for teacher feedback and recommendations. The students use these conference times to improve upon their work, and the teacher uses them to guide teaching throughout the reading of the novel.

After several conferences with students, the teacher realizes that some crucial elements are not being addressed. After making some anecdotal records, he brainstorms a few mini-lessons to teach over the next few periods that will help students understand the importance of citing concrete examples to support their opinions. Through teacher modeling, examples and practice exercises, many of the students are able to revise their work to reflect this new learning and make appropriate changes to meet expectations and deepen their understanding.

Once projects are complete, the multimedia presentations and the soundtracks are graded using the rubric, and an essay is assigned to give students another opportunity to demonstrate what they know. By focusing on the objectives, giving students clear and compelling standards to help them create their projects, and allowing opportunities to improve upon their work, the teacher has created a classroom environment where instruction can be adjusted and students can demonstrate what they know.