

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION IN THE PHILOSOPHY CURRICULUM

Rationale:

According to *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools*, “the primary purpose of assessment and evaluation is to improve student learning.”

The Ontario Curriculum: Social Science and Humanities, Grades 11-12, 2013 outlines the seven fundamental principles that ensure that assessment, evaluation, and reporting are valid and reliable, and that they lead to the improvement of learning for all students.

Teachers should use assessment and evaluation practices and procedures that:

- are fair, transparent, and equitable for all students;
- support all students, including those with special education needs, those who are learning the language of instruction (English or French), and those who are First Nation, Métis, or Inuit;
- are carefully planned to relate to the curriculum expectations and learning goals and, as much as possible, to the interests, learning styles and preferences, needs, and experiences of all students;
- are communicated clearly to students and parents at the beginning of the school year or course and at other appropriate points throughout the school year or course;
- are ongoing, varied in nature, and administered over a period of time to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning;
- provide ongoing descriptive feedback that is clear, specific, meaningful, and timely to support improved learning and achievement;
- develop students’ self-assessment skills to enable them to assess their own learning, set specific goals, and plan next steps for their learning.

Assessment plays a critical role in teaching and learning. The main goal of *assessment for learning* and *assessment as learning* is to improve student learning. A key component of the assessment for learning process is providing descriptive feedback for individual students which will enable them to reflect and improve on their learning by creating specific next steps.

Assessment *As, For and Of* Learning

	Definition	When Used	Examples for the Philosophy Classroom
Assessment <i>As</i> Learning	<p>“Assessment <i>as</i> learning focuses on the explicit fostering of students’ capacity over time to be their own best assessors, but teachers need to start by presenting and modelling external, structured opportunities for students to assess themselves.”</p> <p>(Western and Northern Canadian Protocol, p. 42)</p>	<p>Formative assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs frequently and in an ongoing manner during instruction, with support, modelling, and guidance from the teacher. <p>The information gathered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is used by students to provide feedback to other students (peer assessment), monitor their own progress towards achieving their learning goals (self-assessment), make adjustments in their learning approaches, reflect on their learning, and set individual goals for learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflections • KWHL chart • Exit slip • Learning journals • Peer feedback • Checklists • Three step interview
Assessment <i>For</i> Learning	<p>“Assessment <i>for</i> learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there.”</p> <p>(Assessment Reform Group, 2002, p. 2)</p>	<p>Formative assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs before and during instruction so teachers can determine students’ readiness to learn new knowledge and skills, as well as obtain information about their interests and learning preferences. • Occurs frequently and in an ongoing manner during instruction, while students are still gaining knowledge and practising skills. <p>The information gathered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is used by teachers to monitor students’ progress towards achieving the overall and specific expectations, so that • Teachers can provide timely and specific descriptive feedback to students, scaffold next steps, and differentiate instruction and assessment in response to student needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graphic organizers • Think-Pair-Share • Four Corners • Placemat • Concept map • Academic Controversy • Comic strip • Exit slip • Write or orally present a response to an issue/situation in the voice of a specific philosopher • Web based programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Socrative</i> ◦ <i>Polls Everywhere</i>
Assessment <i>Of</i> Learning	<p>“Assessment <i>of</i> learning is the assessment that becomes public and results in statements or symbols about how well students are learning. It often contributes to pivotal decisions that will affect students’ futures.”</p> <p>(Western and Northern Canadian Protocol, p. 55)</p>	<p>Summative assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs at or near the end of a period of learning, and may be used to inform further instruction. <p>The information gathered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is used by the teacher to summarize learning at a given point in time. This summary is used to make judgements about the quality of student learning on the basis of established criteria, to assign a value to represent that quality, and to support the communication of information about achievement to students and parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student led seminars • Essays • Philosophical cafe • Reflections • Tests • Formal debates • Movie reviews • Visual displays

Triangulation of Assessment

Evidence of Student Achievement for Evaluation: Observations, Conversations, and Products

Evidence of student achievement for evaluation is collected over time from three different sources – *observations*, *conversations*, and *student products*. When evidence is collected from multiple sources over time, the reliability and validity of the evaluation of student learning is increased. This is often referred to as the *Triangulation of Assessment*.

Student products may be in the form of tests, essays, portfolios, reflections, rich performance tasks, demonstrations, and projects.

Observations may include presentations, group or partner work, and discussions.

Conversations may include formal debates, informal classroom discussions on a specific topic, and informal or formal conferences with the teacher.

Growing Success states that “teachers will take various considerations into account before making a decision about the grade to be entered on the report card. The teacher will consider all evidence collected through observations, conversations, and student products.” Historically, most teachers have heavily relied on the collection and evaluation of *student products* as evidence of student learning, often neglecting *observations* and *conversations*. In the philosophy classroom, there are numerous rich opportunities to collect evidence through *observations* and *conversations* that can assist in the accurate determination of a student’s grade.

Rich evidence of student learning in the form of communication is often ignored. Many teachers recognize the valuable data that can be collected through observations and conversations but struggle with a method of recording their observations. The key to any method of tracking is that observations need to be focussed so that the information being recorded is directly related to the learning goals and the success criteria of the lesson/unit. It is usually inadequate to observe that a student has simply participated in a discussion. Rather, the teacher needs to record what expectations were addressed and what level of skill the student demonstrated. As an example of how *observations* and *conversations* can be utilized, consider the use of student-led seminars in the philosophy classroom. Teachers often evaluate the student leading the seminar but rich information can also be gathered about the other students participating in the seminar. Important considerations must be in play. Students must be made aware of the learning goals and the success criteria prior to their evaluation. Appendix 1 is an example of a specific handout that includes the learning goals, success criteria and a rubric that can be shared with students prior to a seminar, so that they can be aware of the focus for the assessment and how they will be assessed. Appendix 2 is a corresponding teacher tracking sheet that the teacher can use to record the level of each student’s response. The teacher tracking sheet can be used throughout the unit and translated into a mark for evaluation at the end of an ethics unit.

Example of Assessment Of Learning Through Conversations in the Philosophy Classroom

Appendix 1: Student-Led Ethics Seminars - Rubric

Learning Goals: We are learning to...

D2. demonstrate an understanding of theories in ethics and evaluate responses to some of the main questions in ethics by major philosophers and schools of philosophy;

D4. use philosophical reasoning skills to develop, communicate, and defend their own responses to philosophical questions in ethics.

Success Criteria: Students can...

D2.3 evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of philosophical responses to some of the main questions in ethics.

D4.1 formulate and explain, using philosophical reasoning skills, their own clear and cogent responses to some of the main questions in ethics

D4.2 evaluate and defend, in philosophical exchanges with others, their own responses to some of the main questions in ethics, and anticipate and respond logically to counter-arguments

	Level 4 (80-100)	Level 3(70-79)	Level 2 (60-69)	Level 1 (50-59)
Evaluating Philosophers' Views (D2.3) <i>Application</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluates various philosophical responses with a high degree of effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluates various philosophical responses with considerable effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluates various philosophical responses with some effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evaluates various philosophical responses with limited effectiveness
Presenting own views using philosophical reasoning (D4.1) <i>Communication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Presents own ideas in a highly clear and relevant manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Presents own ideas in a clear and relevant manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Presents ideas with some clarity and relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Presents ideas with limited clarity and relevance
Evaluating and defending own position (D4.2) <i>Thinking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expresses own ideas in a highly organized and explicit mannerResponds to counter-arguments in a highly informed manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expresses own ideas in an organized and explicit mannerResponds to counter-arguments in an informed manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expresses own ideas with some clarity and organizationResponds to some counter-arguments in an informed manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expresses own ideas with limited organization and clarityResponds to counter-arguments with limited effectiveness

Example of Assessment Of Learning Through Conversations in the Philosophy Classroom

Appendix 2: Student Led Ethics Seminars – Teacher Tracking Sheet

Learning Goals: We are learning to . . .

D2. demonstrate an understanding of theories in ethics and evaluate responses to some of the main questions in ethics by major philosophers and schools of philosophy;

D4. use philosophical reasoning skills to develop, communicate, and defend their own responses to philosophical questions in ethics

Success Criteria: Students can . . .

D2.3 evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of philosophical responses to some of the main questions in ethics.

D4.1 formulate and explain, using philosophical reasoning skills, their own clear and cogent responses to some of the main questions in ethics

D4.2 evaluate and defend, in philosophical exchanges with others, their own responses to some of the main questions in ethics, and anticipate and respond logically to counter-arguments

