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Guest Post: Core Competencies and Student Self Assessment with Linda O'Reilly

I am very pleased to welcome Linda O'Reilly as my first "guest blogger". After retiring from the Vancouver School District, Linda is now busy with her own educational consulting business. As well, she has worked as a sessional instructor at Simon Fraser University, was lead consultant on Nelson Literacy B.C., and is a School Liaison for the One-To-One Literacy Society. Over the past three years, much of Linda's work has focused on BC's new curriculum where she partners with teachers to bring the new curriculum 'to life' in their classrooms. Her workshops and school in-service sessions are in high demand! In this post, she shares some of her new thinking around the core competencies and student self-assessment and has included additional links to some of her documents and posters. Thank you, Linda, for generously sharing your work with us!
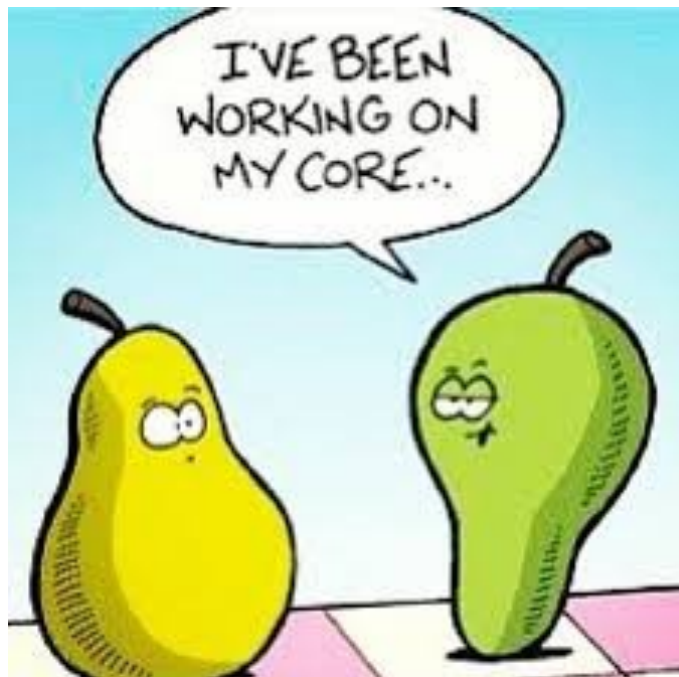
Kids, Core Competencies and Self-assessment

By Linda O'Reilly

This is an exciting time to be a teacher in British Columbia. As I travel about the province facilitating professional learning sessions, I am amazed with how teachers and students are jumping into the Core Competencies. Just think about this. In classrooms across the province, teachers have become thoughtful designers of core competency learning –creating

opportunities for students to communicate, think critically and creatively, and act in socially responsible ways. On one hand, emphasis on core competency growth in BC classrooms is not new. On the other hand, many teachers are grappling with the core competencies and student self-assessment. With this in mind, and in the words of Maureen Dockendorf, "It doesn't matter where you start, it matters that you start."

A Place to Start

When students walk into our classrooms they bring their core competencies with them! The competencies are about how children go about 'doing' the job of learning. For example, how students communicate, work with others, and deal with conflict. When it comes to helping students develop core competencies, the teacher's role is more like a coach –stretching and strengthening the core competency growth of their students. So where does one start?

1. Discuss with students that different people have different capabilities and strengths (things they are good at, strong points, talents, skills) and stretches (things they need to work on). Encourage students to use 'I can statements' when they are describing their strengths. Let the students lead the discussion as much as possible.
2. Introduce core competencies as the 'six doing engines'. Explain to students that the core competencies have 'job descriptions'. For example a critical thinker – explains why things happen, evaluates ideas, forms opinions, draws conclusions, understands the perspective of others, predicts what might happen in the future, and thinks of creative solutions.
3. Create kid-friendly 'doing' definitions for each core competency. Post the competency definitions so you can refer to them and emphasize their importance with students.
4. Create a competency word wall to display competency language for students to reflect upon as they engage with the core competencies. Children need to talk about their competency learning. Language and core competencies grow together and nurture each other's development.
5. Weave kid-friendly competency language as much as possible into all lessons, conversations, discussions and self-assessment activities.
6. Create opportunities for ongoing reflection and self-assessment of core competencies.
7. When you see your students being critical thinkers for example, point it out to them –'notice it, name it'. Make clear what kind of thinking the student is being asked to show evidence of, for example, whether it is analyzing, comparing and contrasting, decision making, challenging an argument.

Student Self-assessment of Core Competencies

Ultimately, we want students to be the self-assessors of their competency learning. The process of self-assessment is what matters, not the format. The goal is to guide students toward the development of their own 'learning to learn' skills. Students are thus equipped with their own language and tools for competency learning and are more likely to transfer and apply these sets of skills into their daily life. Always keep in mind, students need to be living and doing the core competencies so when they are asked to assess their competencies, they can!

Steps to Student Self-assessment

1. Address students' perceptions of self-assessment including wishful thinking, over inflation, and under inflation.
2. Teach critical thinking skills required for student self-assessment.
3. Provide students with many opportunities to practise different aspects of the self-assessment process.

4. Develop metacognitive skills. Metacognitive skills are important organizers of the tasks that students perform (e.g. planning, setting goals, adjusting what they are doing to improve the quality of their work).

5. Encourage students to assess their own progress by asking themselves key questions about where they are in their learning (1) where am I now? (2) Where am I trying to go? (1) What do I need to do to get there? (4) How will I know I have accomplished what I set out to do?)

6. Use the I Statements and ask students to assess their development by asking (1) Is this a bit like me? (2) Is this quite a bit like me? (3) Is this very much like me?

Student Goal Setting

Students should be encouraged to write their goals down during the self-assessment process, and be reminded of them regularly. The establishment of goals and having students track their progress toward these goals makes the learning process more transparent. To accomplish this with your students begin by asking a few basic questions:

- What new competency skill will you work on?
- What attributes/dispositions would you like to develop?
- **Set a Goal:** I want to___ by___ so I will___.

Kids, Competencies and Student Self-assessment Resource

This is resource to open up a dialogue with students about the core competencies and self-assessment. The framework is not to be followed in a prescriptive way. Teachers are encouraged to use the framework in a way that works best for their students. Think of your students – you know them best. The resource includes:

- Access to kid-friendly competency videos, links to excellent websites, and core competency bibliographies
- Ways to get started with the core competencies
- Ways to incorporate reflective thinking into the school day
- Strategies for student-self assessment and goal setting
- Growing my Core Competencies Self-assessment strategies
- Six Doing Engines poster set
- Icons for the 'six doing engines'
- I statements written in kid-friendly language (K-2)

I wish you a continued journey of inspired learning with the Core Competencies!

Links to Linda's documents:

[(44) 2017 FEBRUARY 10 KIDS, COMPETENCIES, AND SELF-ASSESSMENT COPY 2](#)

[(10) 2017 K-9 FEBRUARY 10 2017 COMPETENCY CONTINUUM copy (2)](#)

[GROWING MY COMPETENCIES (1)](#)

[Primary Competency Posters copy 2](#)

[Intermediate Competency Posters copy 2](#)

About Linda:

More than anything, I am a teacher at heart. I thrive on confirming and challenging my colleagues' thoughts about what's possible in the world of teaching and learning. I have a rich background as a classroom and resource teacher, university instructor, workshop presenter, author, and educational coach. While I enjoy all aspects of consulting, I think my favourite part is collaborating with teachers. The ideas start to flow and that's always when the fun begins.

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2 responses to *"Guest Post: Core Competencies and Student Self Assessment with Linda O'Reilly"*

Joan Billey

April 30, 2017 at 3:27 pm

Thank you so much for sharing Linda's work. I love her ideas for students, but realized how important it is to look at my own core competencies as a supporter for student teachers and fellow teachers, and to be more self analytical about where I need to develop my own skills. I appreciate all you post and share. It is so critical to keep learning, and you allow so many of us to do that through your work. What a gem you are!!!

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Reply

Adrienne Gear

April 30, 2017 at 8:52 pm

Thanks, Joan! Linda is great and has a wealth of knowledge on the new curriculum. I love sharing and glad that many teachers continue to travel the learning journey as they teach! Such an important part of our profession! Are you home from your amazing trip yet?

Reply