The Power of Student Self-Assessment

Summary: It can be difficult for teachers to find the time to give detailed feedback to each of their many students. Thankfully, recent research has shown that having students conduct self-assessments can be a powerful tool even for young students. In an article for Johns Hopkins University's *Better: Evidence-Based Education* magazine, University of Albany professor Heidi Andrade summarizes best practices for student self-assessment.

Practical Applications

Andrade explains that for effective student self-assessment, students need:

- Awareness of the value of self-assessment
- Access to clear criteria on which to base the assessment
- A specific task or performance to assess
- Models of self-assessment being used
- Direct instruction in and assistance with self-assessment
- Practice
- Cues regarding when it is appropriate to self assess
- Opportunities to revise and improve the task or performance

This last point is key – self-assessment is primarily useful as a formative, or in-process, strategy; it does not work as well on tasks that are already complete. The three key steps to having students self-assess on a particular assignment are:

1) Articulate expectations. Students must know explicitly what they are striving for on a particular task. Often, this involves a rubric, which can be either teacher created or co-created with the students

2) Self-assessment. After students make a first attempt at an assignment (say, a writing piece or math word problem), they compare their work to the rubric. For instance, in writing, Andrade says, "I ask students to use colored pencils to underline key phrases in the rubric, then underline in their drafts the evidence of having met the standards articulated by the phrase [in the same color]." Students make reminders for themselves of areas they have not yet mastered in their first attempt.

3) Revision: Students must be given an opportunity to use their self-assessment to guide revision of their work. Without this step, the strategy falls flat.

Conclusion and Citation

Research shows that student self-assessment has significant benefits both in terms of increasing performance on specific assignments and also in terms of building students' long-term self-regulation skills. It requires thoughtful set-up by the teacher, but once the conditions are created, "self-assessment can ensure that all students get the kind of feedback they need, when they need it, in order to learn and achieve."

Andrade, H. "Promoting Learning and Achievement through Self-assessment." *Better: Evidence-Based Education* (Spring 2011), pp. 12-13. http://tinyurl.com/3r7xs7h (subscription only).