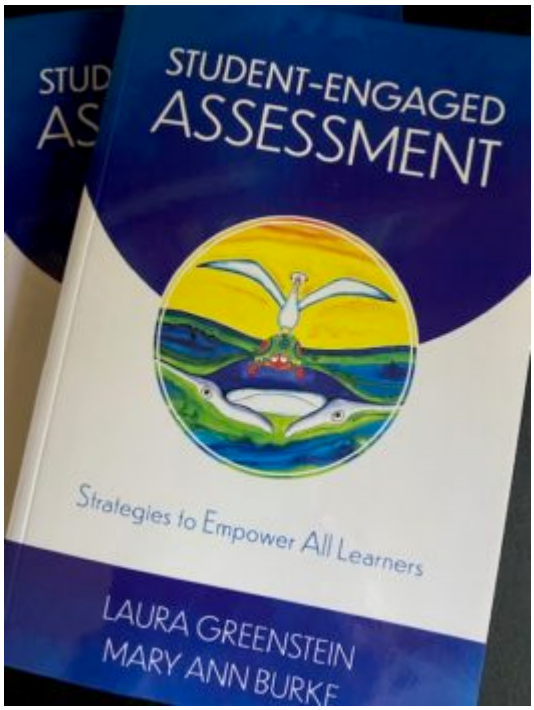
How You Can Support Student Success

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This post is first of a series based on excepts from my book on *Student-Engaged Assessment: Strategies to Empower All Learners* by Laura Greenstein and Mary Ann Burke (2020). You can purchase the book from Roman and Littlefield for charts, examples, and worksheets on how to engage students to become owners of their learning successes.

Students Must Feel Safe and Secure

If children are to be successful, they must first feel safe and supported. Maslow taught us this in 1943 through his hierarchy of needs. Yet, for some learners, life is not safe. They may live in crime-ridden neighborhoods where it’s not safe to walk home from school. Others are chronically hungry. A student named Jake qualified for free/reduced lunches, but his mother was too proud to accept help. Jake would routinely show up at the learning lab, hoping there were some leftovers

from the day’s snack. The teacher always put a little aside for him, and he was always appreciative in his own shy way.

By his junior year, he had taken and did well on ASVAB (the military aptitude test) and enrolled in the Delayed Entry Program. Two years after his high school graduation, he returned to his school to tell his story and thank his teachers, counselors, and especially the principal who mentored him through the process. He was proud of his promotion to Specialist and had already earned a service ribbon. Privately, he told me that he was glad to finally be able to pay his mother back for all the sacrifices she made for him. For Jake, building foundations of food, medical care, and stability in his life were essential foundations for success.

Teachers Must Clarify Learning Intentions

Well-being in assessment comes when students have a clear understanding of the learning intentions and also have opportunities to personalize and adjust them in ways that make sense to them and support their success. This may mean deconstructing large-scale standards into actionable and measurable interim steps. For example, “Compare two decimals by reasoning about their size” (CCSS Math 4.NF.C.7) becomes “I can read and understand decimals and put them in order.” When Carlita is asked on a test which answer is true (A) 0.7 > 0.4 or (B) 0.4 > 0.7, she becomes apprehensive when she can’t remember what that the “<” and “>” symbols mean. Fortunately, when her teacher posts that “>” means “is greater than,”

she has an aha moment and completes the task accurately.

Once learners' needs for safety and well-being are met and they feel academically and emotionally secure in their classroom, *inclusion and belonging* is another step towards personal achievement. Standardized tests are mandatory, but may not sustain these basic needs for struggling learners. Our series of blogs will preview classroom techniques and assessments that are inclusive of all learners, relevant to the student, and aligned with learning.

Learning Assessments Must Inform and Guide Students

Informative assessment is essential for all students, especially those who may feel disenfranchised or have experienced failure. Instructionally supportive assessment relies on frequent check-ins for understanding as well as feedback that provides clarification on misunderstandings and guidance on next steps. These assessments give learners voice, such as adding annotations to their responses or asking lingering questions within the assessment. Feedback can come from teachers as well as peers with these prompts: "What you said about ___ is very clear, but I'm still confused on___" or "I see you included ___ but have you also thought about ___?"

As students mature, they develop clearer ideas about who they are and how they think. They begin to recognize their strengths as well as struggles. This development of *self-awareness and self-esteem* can be fostered by

assessments that encourage and guide students in monitoring their learning. When students become reflective and flexible assessors, they can also personalize learning intentions. For example, when given a choice in showing understanding of event sequences, Wei decides to make an instructive video on writing a graphic novel, while Fiona wants to illustrate a user's guide to sustainable gardens.

Students Can Define How They Learn Best

One day, Max said to his teacher, "I want to try something new for my project, but don't want to be penalized for lack of creativity since it's the first time I'm using Piktochart, an infographic maker." After a brief conversation, they mutually agreed to count the content ratings of the rubric at 80% and the design ratings at 20%. With the pressure off, Max was inspired to try a new way to show his learning. In all these examples, consistency and clarity of learning objectives are central to success.

Our November 2nd post will discuss what teachers can do to increase students' learning successes. For more charts, examples, and worksheets on how to engage students to own their learning, you can purchase *Student-Engaged Assessment: Strategies to Empower All Learners* by Laura Greenstein and Mary Ann Burke (2020) from Roman and Littlefield.