

# Students Own Their Own Learning Assessments



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This post is ninth of a series based on excerpts 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.

# Components of Student Owned Assessments

Components of students owning their learning assessments include:

Learning intentions and outcomes are clear from the start. Learners understand what and how they will be learning and why it is relevant and worthwhile. Student owned assessments respect and respond to the student's needs, interests, and abilities. For

example, Bruno is excited when he learns he can pick which era and which president to research for his project. Bruno plans to present his research in a game format that he intends to align with the learning goals and rubric.

Social and emotional skills are the foundation for progressing successfully towards personal mastery. For Murray, as he develops self-regulation, he notices that his grades also get better.

Students own their assessments when they

elaborate and personalize the learning intentions; understand the value of assessment data as well as descriptions of achievement; recognize the importance of non-cognitive skills including intrapersonal awareness (i.e., self-regulation, mindset, and perseverance) and interpersonal understanding (i.e., perspective taking, collaboration, and conflict management).

## How Students Evaluate Their Learning Assessments

Assessments measure a spectrum of learning outcomes from core knowledge to innovation. Planning is relevant to all subjects from astronomy to music. In art, Mr. Parisi uses content vocabulary and images to introduce styles. Students then select one period and produce their own example of art from that period. A rubric is used in the peer-review.

Students can regulate their learning and determine their next steps. When students monitor their progress, they appreciate successes and take action on closing lingering gaps. Chara sees that she has missed a step in the learning progression. She knows that she must go back and check that she followed the correct sequence whether it be in her narrative, math problem, or photosynthesis.

Assessments are reciprocal, on-going, and embedded throughout learning. Harriet explains, "In Mr. Jae's class, it's okay to make mistakes because they are opportunities for learning. It's way better than getting a bad grade at the end." Students can also utilize feedback that is focused, specific, and instructive. They respond by making adjustments to their learning. When Alef is given small chunks of feedback on specific learning aims, he quickly recognizes that he misunderstood step three in the formula. Students are empowered to:

- Self-regulate their process, tempo, and depth of learning.

- Appropriately respond to difficulties and setbacks using problem-solving and redirection.

- Recognize that mistakes are valuable learning opportunities.

- Take purposeful action on data, feedback, and other evidence of learning.

## How Students Track Academic

# Progress

The emphasis is on progress and improvement. Assessment is diagnostic as well as formative and summative. Coretta says “Each time I write a letter it gets better. Now my salutation, content, and closing are stronger than ever.” Formative assessments help students know where they are at the beginning of learning, monitor progress throughout learning, and inform their steps in narrowing their learning gaps and clarifying misunderstandings. By using a learning tracker, Camille can see she confused the verb tense, so she goes back and corrects her work.

Assessments require students to think about and apply what they have learned. Answers that can be looked up are less significant than those requiring analysis, forming connections, and producing defensible solutions. Tracking progress provides opportunities for revision and improvement before the final score.

## How Teachers Support Students' Tracking of Academic Progress

Ongoing support and guidance from instructional resources, peers, and the teacher are essential in developing of assessment-capable learners. Access to resources is vital. Focused feedback and opportunities to modify work with accompanying explanations of what, how, and why they made the changes also are important. Fredericka gains little insight from a score of 71% on her quiz. She prefers support on the concepts she didn't understand and guidance on fixing her mistakes. When

learning and assessment are meaningful, useful, and appropriately challenging, it not only reinforces learning but also make learning endure. When Chan explains how Zoa can correct her graph, he also deepening his own understanding. Reframing opportunity as ownership means that students clearly understand the learning intentions, and now have the privilege and responsibility for fine-tuning and personalizing the learning goals. For some, this may mean deconstructing the goal into smaller and more achievable steps and for others adjusting the depth or breadth of the goal.

The plan for student ownership begins with student understanding and interpreting of learning attentions. Teachers must also ensure that the students feel safe, are healthy, and are prepared to learn each day. Students are less successful when they are malnourished tired, scared, and disengaged. Assessment-proficient learners in partnership with their teachers must agree on what must be assessed, how it will be assessed, and why it needs a student-owned assessment.

Our January 18th post will explain how students assess their learning outcomes. 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](#).