



Structured Choice
BOTH Teacher Assignment and Student Choice through Visible Learning
Students have the steering wheel and teachers have the brake



Follow this guide to developing structured choice assignments.

Step 1: Select Curriculum Goals

1. Choose a unit or topic.

Unit/Topic: _____

Reflection Questions:

- What is worth understanding about this topic?
- Why is this topic important?
- Where can this topic take you as a learner (connections, richness)?
- This topic can be studied as a good example of _____?
- What's an interesting slant or angle on this topic?
- How can students readily engage with this topic?
- What will be difficult for your students in this topic?

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2. List the Understanding, Knowledge, and Skills students should master through learning in this unit.

Understanding _____

Knowledge:

-
-
-

Skills:

-
-
-

- Big Picture Outcome: Completing this unit will prepare students for...
- How are these knowledge and skills related to the CCSS expectations?

For this guide, the purpose of the Structured Learning Choice will provide multiple assessments to further student learning and demonstrate depth and dimension of understanding.

Student Products and Performances Ideas

Students use their content knowledge and a variety of skills to create products or performances. These products or performances can be used to assess student growth and strengths. This is a brainstorm of possible products or performances grouped by the communication method primarily used for that assignment.

Speaking

Persuasive speech
Oral report
Poem
Mock newscast
Choral reading
Skit
Play
Song
Storytelling
Teach others
Debate
Oral interpretation
Monologue
Reader's theatre
Interview
Introduction

Drawing

Illustration
Animation
Greeting card
Portrait
Postcard
Cartoon
Logo
Advertisement
Map
T-shirt design
Storyboards
Scrapbook
Paper dolls
Costume design
Mural
Poster

Create with Technology

Slide show or PowerPoint

Video taping
Video editing – commercial or documentary
Webpage
Animation

Building

Photos
Diorama
3D model
Collage
Claymation
Mask
Costume
T-shirt
Invention
Sound recording
Exhibit
Museum
Song/music

Writing

Brochure
Book cover
Letters
Epilogue
Alternate ending
Essay test
Newspaper article
Biography
Directions
Script
Lab report
Equations
Diary/Journal
Recipe
Historical fiction

Chronology
Song lyrics

Moving

Tableaux
Experiment

Dance
Lip sync
Pantomime

Step 2: Brainstorm Assessments

Note: This step changes depending on the purpose of the *Structured Learning Choice*. If the purpose of the assignment is review, then instead of assessments, review assignments would be brainstormed. If the purpose of the assignment is to create a resource for editing writing, then the brainstorm would be about editing tasks. For this guide, the Structured Learning Choice will provide multiple assessments to further student learning and demonstrate depth and dimension of understanding.

Brainstorm list of assessment choices – use the product list and thinking list (on next page) to gain ideas that would allow students to demonstrate the understanding, knowledge, and skills listed above. Do not edit your brainstorm – write as many ideas as you can think of on a separate piece of paper. The assessment choice board could be used at any time during a unit.

Naming Seven Types of Thinking

Curious

- Wonder
- Ask questions
- Observe closely
- Find problems
- Be playful

Intellectually Careful

- Evaluate Evidence
- Alert for errors
- Check for accuracy
- Corroborate information
- Justify opinions with evidence

Reflective

- Compare a product to criteria
- Evaluate a process
- Seek understanding
- Gather other opinions
- Consider relationship between parts and a whole
- Question results
- Identify patterns

Strategic

- Set goals
- Take action
- Evaluate and revise plans
- Use knowledge to make decisions
- Reason through problems

Creative

- Create novel solutions
- Make unusual connections
- Combine ideas
- Rearrange elements into new patterns

Adventurous

- Explore alternative views
- Open minded
- Think with a wide scope
- Seek understanding



Art Class

ca. 1943-1945 **William H. Johnson** Born: Florence, South Carolina 1901 Died: Central Islip, New York 1970 tempera and pencil on paper sight 22 7/8 x 16 7/8 in. (58.2 x 42.9 cm) Smithsonian American Art Museum Gift of the Harmon Foundation 1967.59.176 Not currently on view

<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=12226>

Collaborative

- Share ideas with others
- Ask clarifying questions
- Value the opinions of others
- Build learning through interaction

Step 3: Select Assessments that Meet Curricular Goals

Reflection Questions:

Think about the assessment choices and add new ideas.

Building Understanding

- Can students do this activity without really understanding?
- Does this activity allow students to both develop and demonstrate understanding?
- What does this assessment tell me about what students do and do not understand?
- What kinds of thinking are required to do these activities?
- Can I find out if students' misconceptions and stereotypes are changing?
- Do these activities help students to confront and work through particularly challenging ideas required to understand this topic?

Preparation

- What foundations of knowledge, skills, and understanding need to be built so students can do these activities with understanding?

Management/Feedback

- Can students show me and others what they understand through these assessments?
- How can I give students feedback on their progress toward developing understanding through these assessments?
- How can I help students to self-assess?
- What opportunity is there here for students to offer feedback to peers and learn from the learning of others?

Use Criteria to choose assessments:

1. Place a **check** next to brainstormed **assessments that are particularly useful for making visible student understanding, knowledge, and skills.**

- Students engage actively
- Students engage thoughtfully
- Students' thoughts and actions will demonstrate mastery of the curriculum goals

2. Considering only checked ideas, **circle ideas that are practical** considering resources: time and materials.

3. Make sure that each choice asks students to engage in purposeful thinking moving them toward mastery of a learning target.

4. Use only the circled ideas to create a *Structured Learning Choice* assignment.

Step 4: Create a Choice Board or Menu

Use the assessments that are both checked and circled from the brainstorm.

Consider arranging the assessments by:

- Form – type of finished product
- Purpose – to persuade, inform, model, etc.
- Skills used
- Communication method used: drawing, writing, building, speaking or moving
- Vocabulary and background knowledge used or developed
- Interaction with other people or resources to complete task
- Audience
- Grouping to complete task
- Topic
- Size of project
- Level of difficulty
- Type of resource or material

Establish directions for completing structured choice to eliminate any management challenges such as students “choosing” the wrong assignment. For example, require crossing middle in a tic-tac-toe board to require a particular assignment for all students.

- Required choices (for example a tic-tac-toe must cross the center square)
- Free choice
- Number of choices and size of tasks in relation to available time and resources
- Some choices being giving or receiving feedback to peers as requirements
- Stops to check in with the teacher
- “Go Back” squares, that require students to return and reflect on a previous task.
- Arrows that demonstrate that learning is not always a forward moving linear process, so chances to go back and revise, practice, and connect previous ideas to new tasks.
- Rules to foster students making choices that extend their skills.

Step 5: Create one grading tool for the assessments

Begin by brainstorming a list of criteria. Then determine what is most important to focus for this unit.

If creating a rubric then consider:

Criterion	Quality			
	Yes	Yes, but	No, but	No
Gives enough details.	Yes, I put in enough details to give the reader a sense of time, place, and events.	Yes, I put in some details, but some key details are missing.	No, I didn't put in enough details, but I did include a few.	No, I had almost no details.

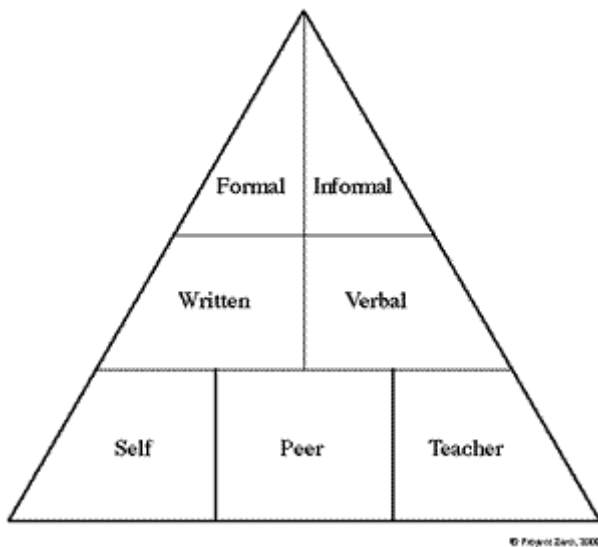
Andrade, H. <http://learnweb.harvard.edu/ALPS/thinking/docs/rubricar.htm>

Step 6: Create a Management Plan for Using with Student

Time	Decide when assignments/tasks will be due. Structured Learning Choices can be completed in class or as homework.
Materials	Prepare needed materials to enable students to complete assignments independently. For example, write a dialog between two characters is a task in a Reading Response Learning Choice Assignment. Offering lined paper for the character’s name and then what the character says enables students to write the dialog without teacher assistance.
Preparation	Plan how students will access and store materials and monitor their own progress.

Grading	<p>Determine if each task be graded or completion of the entire assignment. Because there may be several products from each student, avoid the teacher grading all tasks. Use peer feedback and self reflection, as well as teacher feedback. Organize a sharing day or exhibition and invite experts (parents, community members, and other educators) in to view the collection of products and offer feedback.</p> <p>Establish criteria for high quality work. Notice the criteria on the <i>Structured Learning Choice</i> examples in the example booklet in the resource section of this blog.</p>
Feedback	<p>Use peer feedback, self reflection, and in class teacher conferencing to increase the learning.</p> <p>Use the additional resources on the next pages to consider how students will receive and offer feedback during Structured Learning Choice. In the example booklet in the resource section of this blog there are sample self-reflection and peer feedback forms.</p>

The Feedback Pyramid



The Pyramid and Ladder of Feedback

One way to organize the types, forms and sources of feedback is by using the Feedback Pyramid. Teachers and other facilitators of learning use it to both plan and reflect on their assessments. With it they combine different key components to create a variety of ongoing feedback moments and methods:

Type: Formal vs. Informal

The top of the pyramid describes the type of feedback learners can receive. A quick informal conversation with a teacher, a note from a peer, a review of one's own work, or an explanation from a parent might support understanding more than a formal grade on a project. When we create feedback in our classrooms, striking a healthy balance between informal and formal feedback is key. Too much informal feedback and students may have

difficulty drawing judgments about their progress. Too much formal feedback and students may become extrinsically motivated by grades.

Form: Written and Verbal

Assessments should offer feedback to the learner using a variety of forms. For example, a teacher may write feedback in the margins of students' journals or speak with students to give feedback, individually or in small groups. Perhaps there are other forms of feedback thinking of Learning Profiles using MI theory or learning styles. Creating a variety of forms that communicate useful information to the learner is a key element in crafting feedback.

Source: Self, Peer, and Teacher

Assessments should leverage many different sources of feedback. The teacher is not the only source of information in a classroom. Students can offer valuable feedback to each other.

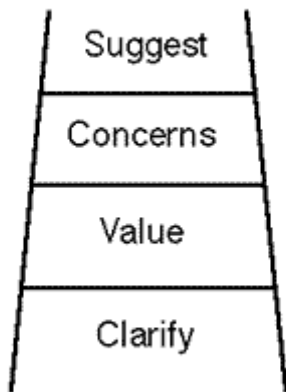
How is this pyramid used?

Some teachers use it to reflect on their various assessments. A teacher might say, "Well I've got many assessments like pop quizzes that are formal and give written feedback to the student from me the teacher." This pyramid urges that teacher to complement those assessments (or replace some) with informal, verbal, peer and self-assessment strategies. Teachers also use the pyramid as a planning device. In order to create a rounded assessment experience for students, a teacher might ask, "**Can I create some informal, verbal, self assessments early on in the unit? What might be some informal, written, peer assessments? What types of formal assessments can I build?**" In this sense, the pyramid becomes a tool that teachers use to create feedback to support understanding.

Created by Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education

There are many specific feedback tools we can use with our students to help cultivate a culture of assessing for understanding. One simple and highly successful tool is the **Ladder of Feedback**, which recommends that any process of providing feedback follows some general steps: 1. clarify, 2. value, 3. offer concerns, and then 4. suggest

The Ladder of Feedback



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Clarify: When students share their work, their ideas may not seem clear or some information may be missing. Clarifying by asking questions about unclear points or absent ideas before feedback is given is crucial. This step can help teachers and other students gather relevant information before informed feedback can be given.

Value: After gathering the proper information, expressing your appreciation for students and their ideas is fundamental to the process of constructive feedback. Valuing builds a supportive culture of understanding and helps students to identify strengths in their work they might not have recognized otherwise. Stressing the positive points of the work, noting strengths and offering honest compliments sets a supportive tone during a feedback session. Paying attention, nodding and taking notes are other examples of behaviors

that set and model a positive atmosphere. Such valuing moves show that the giver of feedback honors the student and his strongest ideas.

Offer Concerns: Often there are legitimate concerns about the work being assessed. Perhaps you see problems or don't agree with the ideas or actions in question. Now is the time to raise such concerns - not as derisive accusations or abrasive criticisms, but as honest thoughts and concerns. "Have you considered . . .", "What I wonder about is . . .", "Perhaps you have thought about this, but . . ." These are all ways of framing concerns in non-threatening ways.

Suggest: Offering suggestions is the last vital rung in supporting learners in developing understanding. Giving suggestions for solving the problems we identified during the Offer Concerns step can help the learner use the feedback to make improvements. Of course, there is no guarantee that the learner will use the suggestions, nor need there be one. Suggestions are just that--suggestions--not mandates.

How do teachers use the ladder? They often use it to guide conversations with students and between students. You might teach it by modeling its use in front of a whole class, then requiring that students use it to give peer feedback

(*) This text, used to describe the Ladder of Feedback, is an excerpt (with some modification) from the Assessing for Understanding WIDE course designed by Daniel Wilson and taught by Heidi Goodrich.