

M1-S9: Assessment Across Learning Environments

CLH	Hi Gina!
GK	Hi Christina! What's our topic today?
CLH	Our topic is assessment.
GK	That's it? Just...assessment?
CLH	Actually our topic is authentic, meaningful assessment that motivates students to pursue their own learning with guidance from ourselves.
GK	Needless to say...I think we always have to add this, across learning environments!
CLK	That is right. I'm going to share a clip from a TedTalk with you and our listeners.
GK	Sounds great.
CLH	This talk has really influenced the way I think about assessment – not just as a test of knowledge, but as a system of checks, feedback and support. The speaker is Azul Terronez, an instructional coach, and his talk is called “What Makes a Good Teacher Great”. Here's what he has to say. You kind of have to hear the whole thing, because of what a great teacher is.
GK	Ready.
CLH	<p>Azul Terronez: Think about a time that you have some enduring understanding, a time when you learned something that you still remember and use to this day, like throwing a baseball or riding a bike. I remember learning to ride a bike from my mom when I was 5 years old. She took off the training wheels of my bike, got behind me and began to push. We ran and ran, until she finally let go and I began to ride a bike. That's what I did, that's how I learned to ride a bike. I can still ride a bike til this day, from that moment, but can you imagine if I tried to learn to bike from my mom in a classroom, what it would look like? “First, Son, you need to learn all the parts of a bike. There's the pedals and the crank, and there's a chain that turns the wheel. You have to have a significant force; once the force has enough momentum, you can keep your balance. That's how a bike works. I want you to learn all the parts, be able to label them and draw them. Then you're going to learn and write a research paper about the history of bike riding. All the important elements, the adventure, the development of bikes. And at the end of that, you're going to take a final examination. If you pass and get an A, you can ride a bike.</p> <p>At 5 years old, I think I would've said, 'Never mind, I'll just walk.'</p>
GK	<p>Woah. “Never mind, I'll just walk.” I can see why that got to you.</p> <p>This is what students are saying to us when they put in the least possible amount of effort into writing that final unit essay or when they take that final exam.</p>
CLH	I know, right? How many times have you given an assignment and had a student say, “How many pages does this have to be?”, or “Is this going to be graded?” When you hear those dreaded questions that make me want to throw my tape dispenser at the wall. When that happens I know that my student is not engaged in the learning -- they're actually just engaged in the grade.

M1-S9: Assessment Across Learning Environments

GK	So how do we create assessments that kids are so interested in that they don't care how many pages they need to write? How do we give students feedback that helps them understand how they can do better, and makes them feel like they actually want to make revisions or investigate a topic further? Because they actually want to.
CLH	That's exactly what we'll be looking at in this session. We're going to be looking at: 1. How to give feedback that motivates and leads to investment, 2. how to leverage that investment in the topic and use it to fuel authentic assessment, and 3. how to take those authentic assessments and ensure that they are viable across all learning environments.
GK	The first place we dig into is feedback that motivates and leads to investment. That's an interesting starting point for the topic of investment. What's the relationship here between feedback and assessment?
CLH	It's leveling up our teacher-talk to include teacher- listening. Even though we are well intentioned and trying our best, sometimes our feedback just doesn't land for our students, and the effect of that shows in their assessments. In order for our students to feel invested in their work, they have to know what they're doing right, what they're doing wrong, and how they can do it better. And they have to hear these things in clear, explicit terms. They have to hear it as a conversation between the two of you. They have to know that we aren't just talking, we're also listening.
GK	I see. I've also seen that process described as a feedback loop. In other words, when we give feedback, it's an ongoing process that doesn't ask students "do you know this information?" but rather, it says to them, "what can we do to help you really embed this information?"
CLH	Exactly. Effective feedback is so powerful because it helps students make meaning out of their learning, and helps them see how they can get closer to their learning goals. It takes time, and it takes practice, but in the end, the results are worth it. Feedback that is corrective, specific, and timely has been found to be "highly effective for enhancing the learning of new skills and tasks".
GK	I'll take highly effective. Now the second domain of assessment after looking at feedback is to take that student investment, that intrinsic motivation, and use it to develop authentic assessments.
CLH	Yes. Now that we've gotten the students invested in their learning by having conversations about their work and providing them with effective feedback, they're perfectly positioned to participate in assessments that are authentic, meaningful, and engaging. But what makes an assessment "authentic" for students, versus something that just lets them check the box?
GK	Well, it reminds me of what Azul Terronez said about the bike. None of us learned to ride a bike by learning about the parts of the bike then taking and acing a test on those parts. Or think about the driver's permit test -- the one that asks you what the signs mean and how many feet away you have to be from the car in front of you. Those tests helped us learn about driving, but they didn't help us actually learn to drive. In order to learn how to drive, we had to get behind the wheel and put the pedal

M1-S9: Assessment Across Learning Environments

	to the metal. So the question is, what do we want our students to learn TO DO, as opposed what we want them to learn ABOUT?
CLH	What is key to authentic assessments is to give students an opportunity to showcase their learning in a way that is meaningful to them. It allows them to engage in the content in a real way, and gives them a better understanding of how the information applies to their own lives. As you know, assessments are categorized as either formative or summative . With formative assessment, we want something actionable feedback -- in other words we want the assessments to let us know if we need to change the way that we are teaching, or if we need to go back and review something again.
GK	Yeah and those happen along the way during the course of instruction. There is still this huge role for summative assessments too. In summative assessments, we really want the students to demonstrate that they have made those meaningful corrections. So what I hear you saying is both types of assessments should be authentic and relevant to the student. Whether that means a formative assessment that is an interview between students or a summative assessment that is a collaborative podcast, say, any time that we assess our students, we have to be asking ourselves: how is this helping them to connect to the material?
CLH	And also be accountable to the material.
GK	So the last stop on this journey is, as it always is here in the TALE Academy, how do we expand our sense of authentic assessment across all of the learning environments? What did we take away from what I'm going to call emergency remote teaching assessment?
CLH	Well, one of the hardest things that we came across in teaching over the past 2 years is how to give assessments both in person and remote. A lot of us struggled with assessing students who were remote because they had this opportunity to make dishonest choices that they wouldn't have had if they were sitting right in front of us in the classroom. But the whole " authentic" part of " authentic assessments" means that what we're giving our students feels meaningful to them -- so the impetus to cheat is then minimized.
GK	That's brilliant. So what makes an assessment authentic is the buy-in - so whether that means it's a fun math game for them to play or a deep discussion that helps them think critically about current events, the most important thing to remember is this: Our students deserve to be treated like equal partners in their learning. When we remember that and let go of the mindset that says " Here's what you have to do" and we embrace the one that says "What is it that you want to do?", we're actually on that authentic assessment pathway.
CLH	Creating authentic assessments that travel well across learning environments, that requires planning and care, but it also produces these results that are much more rich and rewarding.
GK	I can't believe we got this far into this podcast and you have not said the word "Kahoot!" to me yet.
CLH	Oh, it's coming. And we'll get into how some ways to assess students across learning environments are more technically involved - students can use Jamboard to post sticky notes with their favorite lines from a poem, they can use FlipGrid to record themselves singing a quick song about fractions, or they can play that tried and true

M1-S9: Assessment Across Learning Environments

	Kahoot to test their knowledge of the Civil War. We can take our best assessments from traditional teaching and ensure that they are connecting to our students in the most meaningful ways possible.
GK	This all sounds great. I'm going to take a stab at summarizing. Our topic in this session is assessment across learning environments. We are first going to zoom out to look at the ways we create systems for feedback and feedforward. When that's in place and you have a handle on that, we'll check out the kinds of authentic assessments that can arise when our students are more invested in the learning outcomes, and finally we'll make sure that these strategies have legs.
CLH	Meaning that they can travel.
GK	Between!
CLH	Learning Environments.
GK	That's all for today. Thank you for laying this out for us, Christina.
CLH	No problem. Bye!