Using formative assessment rubrics in Ethical Capability

Transcript

(GENTLE MUSIC PLAYS)

In 2019 the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority partnered with the Assessment Research Centre at the University of Melbourne to provide professional learning for teachers to strengthen their understanding and use formative assessment rubrics.

**Why use formative assessment rubrics?**

We're really grappling with the capabilities in our school and especially the Ethical Capability, because unlike a lot of other curriculum areas where you know you've got people who have specialist knowledge in that in your college, we don't feel we have that for ethics. And when we looked at the content descriptions and the achievement standards in the F-10 curriculum, it's actually really hard to figure out what they mean.

Capabilities curriculum, it seems like, this big, like, monster and it's like, "Oh, how do we do this? Where do we fit it in? "How are we meant to teach this?" And I think, if anything, looking through it and giving it a crack has, like, yeah, really eased that threat. If you have a look at the curriculum, you can pretty much fit it in anywhere. It's things that the kids are already doing. If the kids aren't doing it, they should be and you should be teaching them these things anyway. So it's probably a lot easier to assess and teach than people probably think.

**What were some considerations when writing or using the rubrics?**

You create a rubric for a piece of curriculum at the start, before you even start planning your unit, and that's based on things that you expect your students to be able to do, say, make, write - you've got your unit plan in that rubric, right? So everything in that rubric you know now that you need to cover that and give the students an opportunity to practise that skill throughout your unit.

You have to give time to the capabilities. You have to treat them like an additional subject area that is going to build within your students something that they're going to be able to use for the rest of their lives. It's probably a more natural fit to align the Ethical Capability to Humanities and Humanities alone, but then educate the other teachers on what's occurring in humanities, so that then they can draw upon that new thinking that students have developed.

It's really a good way to strip back what is it that we want to measure and what is the evidence that we need, which is just to say what the students can see and do and make. And how we frame that, as well, in language that's really easy for us, as teachers and assessors, to understand but also for students to understand. So using action words rather than having sophisticated complex which don't make much sense because they're so subjective. And it's been really good to sort of strip back that assessment idea, really, and think, really, at a sort of much smaller scale, "What is it that we want to get out of an assessment rubric?"

Yeah, I think simplifying it and making it more robust. But this was really good because you can have gaps 'cause you can clearly show actions. It's much easier to align it straight to the standards. So at the same time that you're marking an assessment item, you're also marking to a standard straightaway, like, in a really nice, easy grid. And, yeah, because it's got those actions it's not something that's subjective, it's objective.

**How does formative assessment impact student learning?**

The students use their rubrics a lot more than they used to. They understand them a lot more and they can break them down into sections. It's really useful for our feedback as well. We're able to just use one indicative behaviour and one action that they need to look on to improve. Their outcomes have really improved. They're able to really focus in and work on their skills a lot more, which is really good.

Teenagers love talking about right and wrong but then applying some theory to that, it didn't hamper their enthusiasm for the subject matter. In fact, they was quite impressed with themselves that they can learn big words like consequentialism and then apply that thinking.

So it was really enjoyable to see them go, "Oh, I'm encountering ethical situations all of the time. Now I have a bit more understanding about why I might choose to do this and why I might choose to do that."