Using formative assessment in Science – Primary

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?

Well, I guess it shows you where the gaps are. So if they just understand that there's a sun and a moon in space, but they also understand that Earth spins, it's about connecting those two understandings rather than it just being separated.

So I guess it's better at picking up misconceptions in student learning, because you can see where the gaps are that you might not see if they just drew a diagram. And showing what the next...the next step would be too.

This is more about using a rubric as a feedback tool and showing how you progress to the next stage, and not just focusing on a mark and a number. Focusing on the learning behind it and what is that next stage.

What were some considerations when writing or using the rubrics?

So you had to really get your head around how we're going to bring it down to a small area and not keep it too big, which was...was a bit challenging in the first week.

Yeah.

Yeah.

And working out what it was that was in there, those skills that those kids actually really needed to achieve - that was really tricky to work out, to start with.

It was.

Oh, I think and the other thing too we started off with questioning and predicting.

Yes.

We ended up scaling it back just to questioning. We realised we'd gone too big.

Kids don't always learn the way that we expect them to learn and they don't pick up the concepts necessarily in the sequence that we expect them to, so doing formative assessment like this helps us understand which bits they're getting when and what comes next. Because I think, as adults, we think we know the answers, but sometimes we don't.

(LAUGHS)

Generally, when I'm preparing lessons for my students, I'm thinking about them, thinking about what they would enjoy, and where I'm going with my lesson. But I think having the formative assessment rubric, the amount of work that we put into it, um, how it was honed to what we wanted...what we wanted the students to learn, it was easier to write the task and then I felt more involved in the task. I felt like I had more energy for it as well. And then it was easier to assess the task because, um, sort of everything was prepared

We are very good at teaching the science content, but then the inquiry skills, we...more do them...teach them all at the same time and not specifically. And we don't explicitly teach each broken-down element of the inquiry skills, so when they come into Year 5 and 6, it just gets built up and they have to display all these skills, but they haven't actually been explicitly taught in the lead up. So breaking down the planning and conducting is really interesting.

How does formative assessment impact student learning?

I thought it was really good data because you could quite quickly see students who could still develop open-ended questions, but they weren't considering any cause and effect and their questions may have still been open, but they weren't very scientific. So it was just one of those up-in-the-air kind of questions. So it was very clear on what the next steps were for each of those students.

Well, I think these formative assessment rubrics will be terrific. It'll make our teaching program a lot stronger and, you know, hopefully it'll lead to, you know, much better learning outcomes for the students.