Core Competency Development

Using assessment for learning practices to facilitate student learning in the core competencies
What are core competencies?

The core competencies are sets of intellectual, personal and social and emotional proficiencies that all students need to develop in order to engage in deep learning and life-long learning.

The core competencies along with literacy and numeracy foundations and essential content are at the center of the redesign of curriculum and assessment. They are embedded in each discipline and area of learning and are activated through the learning experiences and activities.

The Core Competencies are:

- Communication
- Thinking - Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking
- Personal and Social
Competencies “in action”:

Competencies come into play when students are engaged in “doing” in any area of learning. This includes activities where students use thinking, collaboration, and communication to solve problems, address issues, or make decisions.

We can make students aware of their use and development in the core competencies by making it explicit when we are engaged in “using” them and by providing opportunities to reflect on them.
How do we ensure core competencies development is being made explicit in our classroom learning experiences?

Answer: 
We can use assessment for learning practices!
What is assessment for learning?

Any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting pupil’s learning. (Black and Wiliam, 2001)
1. **Clear Learning Intentions**: let students know (in a language they can understand) what they are expected to learn.

2. **Criteria**: work WITH learners to develop criteria of what quality looks like.

3. **Descriptive Feedback**: increase descriptive feedback (ongoing dialogue around improvement in learning that causes thinking) and decrease evaluative feedback (numbers, letters, and “good job”).

**Assessment For Learning**

*Big Six Assessment For Learning Practices (Cameron, Jensen)*
4. **Powerful Questions**: increase quality “thinking” questioning to go deeper and show evidence of learning. Move away from factual routine questions. **TALK LESS, ASK MORE.**

5. **Self and Peer Assessment**: Scaffolding of learning of self- and peer assessment in a supportive, collaborative environment enables learners to become thoughtful about all aspects of their learning. Heidi Andrade writes “If students produce it, they can assess it; and if they assess it, they can improve it.”

6. **Student Ownership**: centres on metacognitive awareness and action. Metacognition is enhanced only when students have explicit understandings related to all other aspects of AFL – and are able to take ownership for their learning as a result. Black and Wiliam add, “Have the learner become aware of his/her own thinking – what are my strengths? What do I need to get better at? What is my next step?”

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**Assessment For Learning**

Big Six Assessment For Learning Practices (Cameron, Jensen)
Classroom Example:

Using assessment for learning practices to facilitate development in: communication facet #1: connect and engage with others to share and develop ideas

Note: Grade 3/4 (fifteen grade 3s and nine grade 4s)
Timeframe: September - December
Identify Learning Intentions/Goals

- Identify student need
- Identify the core competency that aligns with the intended learning for the unit of study/sequence/routine

Considerations
- What discipline are you working in; what curricular competencies are you focusing on in the unit; what core competencies are required/will be expressed/will be developed in the course of the unit?
- What will your students need to learn and develop and do in order to engage with the content and/or activities?
- Use the profiles and descriptions to determine where you will begin with your students.
My Story: Identify Student Need

The expectations I have for my class is that all students will connect and communicate to extend thinking and develop ideas. Establishing classroom talk structures is therefore necessary if I expect my students to successful think and share, reflect and coach others.

Based on my measure of the speaking and listening behaviours in my classroom, and my decision to focus on the communication competency facet #1: “connect and engage with others to share and develop ideas”, I determined I would focus on “active listening” And “communicating clearly” as a starting point in developing the communication skills of my students.

All students know that the learning intention: “use talk to extend and deepen thinking” is used in all areas of the curriculum.
Develop Criteria

Work WITH learners to develop criteria for what the the facet of the core competency looks like

- Use criteria-setting process
  - brainstorm,
  - sort and categorize,
  - summarize

*See Anne Davies

My Story: Develop Criteria

We used the co-creating criteria process to create criteria for “active listening” and “communicating clearly”.

The students interact with the criteria on a daily basis. The criteria for “listening” and “communicating clearly” provides students with the foundation for self regulation and self reflection. By connecting and engaging with others, students are also accessing the thinking and personal and social competencies.
Brainstorm
Here you see the “communicating clearly” brainstorm chart. Students brainstormed their ideas about what communicating clearly looks like. The bottom part of the chart shows the ideas that I coached out of them, as they did not come to them on their own.

Sort and Categorize
After brainstorming, we looked at the ideas and determined which ones were similar and could be put together.
Summarize

Together, we summarized the ideas and created a new chart.

The students have ownership of the criteria. It is real and meaningful because they were involved in creating it.
Interact with the criteria, set goals, self and peer assessment, ongoing feedback and learning

Considerations

- Always share the core competency focus/goal in every lesson
- Students set goals and reflect on the core competency development

My story: The Day to Day ‘Work’ of Engaging With the Communication Core Competency

“Use talk to extend and deepen thinking” is a goal (and strategy) in all areas of the curriculum: math, reading, writing and content-area inquiry units.

Students reflect regularly: self, with others, orally, writing on reflection sheet.

Coaching strategies are taught, such as questions and prompts students can use to initiate and respond to others.

Use visuals, non-verbal signals to communicate reflection to teacher (e.g. holding up fingers, shapes etc.)
Ongoing Self and Peer Assessment

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**Name:**

**Partner:**

**Date:** Thursday, Oct. 6 20

**Habit of Mind:** Active listening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Not yet</th>
<th>Almost</th>
<th>Got it!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MY BODY IS STILL</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MY HANDS ARE EMPTY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I LOOK AT THE SPEAKER</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I WAIT FOR MY TURN</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What did I do well? What do I need to do next time?

When I worked with [Student's name], I did a good job of waiting for my turn. Next time I will try harder to keep my body still.

Why is active listening important?

Active listening is important because it shows that you care. Active listening is also important because you can hear important things.
Descriptive Feedback

Descriptive feedback is used by the teacher as well as peers in the classroom in dialogue to improve learning.

Teacher and students use the language from the core competencies profiles, habits of mind and class-generated criteria to provide feedback as well as self-reflect in core competency development.

Note: Education researcher John Hattie, in his book “Visible Learning”, notes that using descriptive feedback is THE single most powerful thing we can use to increase student learning.

My Story: Examples of Teacher Talk

“You met the criteria for active listening in today’s partner talk activity. I noticed that your body was still and you were looking at the speaker”.

“I noticed when you shared your thinking about the story, you supported your ideas with reasons why. You said: “....”. What you shared today helped me understand your thinking”.
Powerful Questions

Powerful questions are “thinking” questions that probe one to go deeper. They are generally open-ended that create opportunity for expanded thinking and new perspective.

Powerful questions provide opportunities to develop understanding of concepts and they also provide learners opportunity for insight into their own core competency growth and development.

My Story: Using Questions

Coaching Questions the students used with each other to achieve the goal: “use talk to extend and deepen thinking”:

Tell me more.

Prove it.

What is your thinking behind that idea?

Have you considered…? Next steps: We are building our collection of coaching questions and will continue to add more as we get more skilled at thinking, speaking and coaching each other.
My Story: Starting the Process of Writing the Reflection

After two months of focusing on “active listening” and “communicating clearly”, we were ready to write our first reflection!

We started out by reflecting and charting what/where/when in our day we connected and engaged with others. Because of the structured talk in our class, and the goal of “use talk to extend and deepen thinking”, the students easily identified ways in which we connected and engaged with others.
**Communication**

**Connect and Engage With Others**
- to extend and deepen thinking
  - Share our thinking
  - coach our partner
  - build on each other's ideas
  - speak clearly
  - listen actively
  - negotiate with our partner

**CRITERIA FOR COMMUNICATING CLEARLY**

**Vocals**
- control your voice "Just right volume"
  - Speak clearly

**Sensible talking**
- on topic
- know your audience

**Body Language**
- look at listeners
- eye contact
- hands empty
- gesturing

**CRITERIA FOR Active Listening**
- My body is still
- My hands are empty
- I look at the speaker
- I wait for my turn
Writing a Core Competency Reflection

Students use the framework of “Four Point Evidence” to write a reflection that demonstrates learning in the core competencies. *Note: Four Point Evidence is adapted from the Gibbs’ Reflective Cycle (1988).

My Story: Writing the Reflection

The students were given the task: “Use Four Point Evidence” to demonstrate learning in “connecting and engaging with others”.
Four Point Evidence

- What?
- So What?
- What’s the Connection?
- Now What?
Four Point Evidence

Collect Evidence

In preparation for writing a reflection using “Four Point Evidence”, we spent a week collecting evidence of when we were engaged in active listening.

Considerations

● Where/when will students find evidence of the core competency being “in action” in their day?
Four Point Evidence Reflecting/Writing Process

- Choose one piece of evidence that demonstrates use of the competency
- Use the framework to demonstrate, reflect and plan for future learning
- Use the classroom talk structure to prepare students for writing the reflection

Considerations
- What level of scaffolding will you need to provide in order for students to be successful?

My Story:

I guided the students through the process of writing the reflection. We collected evidence together, and reflected and shared our thinking through each step. We used an organizer and sentence-starters. I modeled everything. My ultimate goal is to move them towards independence.
Four Point Evidence
Reflecting/Writing Process

Reflecting/Writing Process

In our Shared Reading lesson, we connected and engaged with each other to learn and understand the story. The activity included reading in pairs, taking turns to read, and discussing the story. I found the lesson to be engaging and informative. During the lesson, we shared what we learned and how it related to our own experiences.

What's the connection?

This reminds me of when I played my first soccer game. It was challenging and exciting. The game required teamwork and communication. In a way,Shared Reading lesson, we connect and engage with our partners. I share what I learned and how it related to our own experiences.

What's the connection?

This reminds me of when I played my first soccer game. It was challenging and exciting. The game required teamwork and communication. In a way, it was similar to the Shared Reading lesson, we connect and engage with our partners. I share what I learned and how it related to our own experiences.

New What?

In connecting and engaging with others, I learned the importance of communication and collaboration. It helped me understand the story better and relate it to my own experiences.

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Student Samples of the Reflection

Communication Reflection

In my word study lesson, I connected
and engaged with the text. When
I was working in a group with them,
I learned how to spell long vowels
and short vowel words. The most important
ingredient is to tell what I learned that
week. I shared my thinking with
the class and my partner.

It is important to connect and
engage with others because we
need to grow as brains to learn
and make conversations. One
other idea is you can explain and
coach to help your partner understand
what the class is doing or to
solve a math problem. All of
this can grow your brain.

It reminded me of the time
when I was playing hockey and I
was all by myself when I could
not shoot or pass so I changed.
Next shift I got the puck
then I passed to me friend
and he shot and he scored.
I had to communicate clearly.
In connecting and engaging
with others, I'm improving
in coaching and saying,
I'm going to improve by practice
coaching and using criteria.
Student Samples of the Reflection

Communication Reflection

In our shared math lesson, I connected and engaged with [redacted] and [redacted] and shared my thinking with my partner in the lesson on adding and subtracting double digit numbers. It's important to connect and engage with others because you can get a better idea, you can explain and coach to help your partner understand and grow your brain. Another fact is when you work by your self it's harder to work. This reminds me of when I'm on the ice I have to communicate clearly, that's why everyone knows what position they're supposed to be in. In connecting and engaging with others, I am starting to improve at speaking clearly I'm going to improve by practicing and talking more.

[Image of a brain with arrows indicating parts of the brain]
Each and every day, we continue to develop our communication competency. Students understand that communication is key to their own learning and to the learning of their classroom community.
For this task, I demonstrated the Core Competency...........

- When I completed ..... 
- When I learned ............
- When I discovered........
- When I participated in ..... 
- When I found......................
- When I worked on......

- I think (this Core Competency) is important because...
- Developing this (Core Competency) helps me ...

- Now I wonder...
- Now I think...
- Now I want to know...
- I will improve ......by.....

- This reminds me of ..... 
- This is similar to...... 
- I can make a connection to...

- Now I wonder...
- Now I think...
- Now I want to know...
- I will improve ......by.....