

## General Guidelines of the Assessment of Students' Development as Thinkers

- Identify specific and limited targets: What do you want to look for? (Link back to understanding Map, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, Thinking Dispositions)
- Name observable actions and behaviors for those targets.
- Provide varied and rich opportunities for thinking within content instruction while drawing students' attention explicitly to the thinking they are doing.
- Engage students in performance-based tasks both across and within domains to get a more complete picture of the student (thinking is often contextualized and situation dependent)
- Plan your overall assessment strategy to be ongoing in nature and occurring over an extended period of time and not limited to a single episode.
- Use Multiple points of data to triangulate your assessments (collaborative work, individual work, class discussion, teacher observation, self-reports)

## Designing Performance-Based Assessments of Thinking & Content Learning

Certain conditions of tasks make it more likely that students will engage in thinking and deploy their thinking dispositions. Design PBA tasks so that have as many of the following attributes as possible:

1. Challenging, complex in nature, and not over structured.
2. A clearly defined task, so that students know what they are expected to do, but with ill-structured data/information, so that routine solutions and approaches cannot be applied automatically.
3. Embed contradictions, inconsistencies, uncertainties or some disorganization so that decisions must be made and students will have to go beyond what is given.
4. Open-ended, allowing students to self-construct answers and give varied and individual responses. The task should allow for more than one defensible solution.
5. Provide options and choice that allow students to self-differentiate and select the appropriate level of challenge rather than shutting down.
6. Authentic to the discipline, real world, and/or contextualized situations.
7. Have a high, or no, "ceiling," meaning that students can surprise you and go beyond a limited, pre-determined response.

"Tasks predict performance" and in turn drive learning. When looking at performance tasks, ask yourself: What are students actually being asked to do? You can begin to answer that question by making a list of the verbs/actions required to do the task but can only fully answer it by looking at what students actually do. PBA's that encourage thinking and deep learning are likely to require:

1. Decision-making, exercising judgment, or problem solving.
2. The manipulation of information, thus requiring students to go beyond recalling or restating learned information.
3. Making one's thinking visible by providing justification, explanation, and/or reasoning. (Note: this may entail using follow up questions and probes of initial responses).
4. At least some of the thinking moves from the "Understanding Map."