Reassessment

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Thesis

Educators should allow retake opportunities for students to master content. “The grade is NOT the reward, nor can it ever be considered such. Once a grade becomes a bartering tool, its power to inform stake-holders and be used to make instructional decisions or document progress accurately is impugned” (Wormeli, 2014).   Permitting someone to take an assessment again because they were unsatisfied with the results the first time is a redo.  Failure is not an option!  While some might say retakes do not prepare students for real life, allowing students the opportunity to retake assessments increases learning because retakes allow students who struggle with “test-taking” another chance to master the material, retakes help with overall retention, and retakes encourage students to stay motivated.

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First, allowing students the opportunity to retake assessments increases learning because retakes allow students who struggle with test-taking another chance to master the material. “The students who typically take longer to learn the material, students who truly care about learning content and not just passing assessments, and students who struggle to demonstrate their learning benefit most” (Sackstein, 2019). “The goal in any discipline is mastery, and I’m not as concerned as I used to be about when an individual masters a concept – just that it is in fact mastered” (Cutler, 2019). Retake policies allow students to improve, pushing them to learn material at a different pace. In order to promote student-teacher connectedness, allowing the “students chances to correct their mistakes to show that you have faith in their capabilities” (Blum, p. 2, 2019) is best practice. Require students to relearn, “retakes should not be another spin of the roulette wheel—students who want another shot should demonstrate that they’ve made a genuine effort to study” (Merrill, 2019).

### Additionally, retakes help with overall retention. “Schools’ visions shape what students are expected to know and do when they graduate, how students are assessed and taught, and the ways they are supported to achieve these goals” (SCOPE, p. iv, 2019). Educators need to ensure that students are learning and holding on to that information. Students need to be prepared for college and careers while developing rigorous, relevant, and engaging instruction and assessments. As educators, we can prioritize learning by shifting language and emphasize from task completion to learning growth. “After all, learning is about what the students gain, not what the teachers want” (Austin, 2018). “When schools remove the fear of getting poor grades, students are more willing to take risks in their classes. This can also lead to a greater desire to learn and a greater enjoyment of learning and the desire to learn” (Sackstein, 2019).

Finally, allowing students the opportunity to retake assessments increases learning because students stay motivated. “I would tell myself to do more, forestall student disappointment over grades, which often fuels a feeling of futility, as students see little point in ever trying to succeed in a subject” (Cutler, 2019). Success is dependent on students who are well-prepared, self-confident, and motivated. “Teach students to learn from their mistakes: – encourage re-do’s on papers and tests (Blum, p. 4. 2019). “Students need to believe they can be successful. “Concerns about whether students’ focus on grades is healthy for them emotionally, there is also evidence that grades can have a negative effect on academic progress” (Austin, 2018). “Ideally, feedback should focus students’ attention on the task at hand and the learning required to perform the task more effectively” (Austin, 2018)

However, some believe that “traditional policies” are best for students. “Giving each assessment only once, penalizing late work, and giving zeros in some situations—help most students maximize their learning and improve their time management skills, preparing them for success in college and career. There are a few that emphasize personal responsibility, insisting that there are very few second chances in life, and that regular opportunities to retake tests simply teach kids that consequences are negotiable” (Merrill, 2019). Motivating students with strict guidelines can help students later on in life. “College students who were held to firm deadlines performed better, in general, than students who chose their own deadlines or turned in all work at the end of the semester” (Palma, 2019). Palma (2019), also states that the opportunities of re-dos and having “soft” deadlines allow students to delay: why do something now when I can complete the work at a later time. Holding students accountable the first time, provides “extrinsic motivation to keep students on task on a regular basis” (Palma, 2019). Retakes also allow students to dig themselves into holes that cause health issues such as stress and anxiety. Retakes can be functional if the teacher has time to do them well. “However, every minute writing and grading retakes or grading long-overdue work is a minute that I’m not planning effective and creative instruction, grading current work so students receive timely feedback, or communicating with parents” (Palma, 2019). Discussions have started at Londonderry High School, and in some survey results, teachers feel that students will do just as bad or worse on additional chances, wasting the teachers and the students time, as well as the sense that students will prepare and study less. In the end, “a widespread problem: When given the option of makeup tests, students often gamed the system, failing the initial exam to see what it looked like—and then simply regurgitating the correct answers later. Under those circumstances, it’s a net-zero game: Neither subject mastery nor personal responsibility is achieved” (Blum, 2019).

Thus, while some might say retakes do not prepare students for real life, allowing students the opportunity to retake assessments increases learning. “We look for opportunities for students to relearn and re-do. Are the students learning and mastering the concepts that we want them to? If not, how can we give them opportunities to learn? It is about meeting the standards or trying again. Not everyone learns at the same pace.” (Noguera, Darling-Hammond, & Friedlaender, p. 10, 2015,).

As the research comes together, concerns emerge, in that, students may not take their first attempt seriously – knowing they have a second chance, while providingng multiple opportunities for students becomes overwhelming. All participants need to address all apprehensions head on, holding students accountable in order to give it another chance. “In a competency-based system, reassessments are a necessary part of the learning process” (Stack, 2013). When it is all said and done, is learning more important or is the grade more important. “While grades are extremely important, people often forget about the importance of learning, not just getting good grades. There is a difference between the grade received in a course and the amount of learning that took place in the course” (Rubino, 2013). “Leadership is shared among the adults in the building with a specific focus on incorporating the voices of teachers, staff, administrators, and parents in key decisions” (SCOPE, p. ii, 2019). “It’s about making a difference and helping young people take charge of their learning. That’s a message that speaks strongly to many students today – and it’s one that whole child-oriented educators can surely embrace” (Rebora, p. 9, 2020). Educators need to enable deeper learning, assess student learning and adapt to the student needs with consistent and constant feedback, while offering the opportunities for students to revise their work. By creating a vision that is shared on what teaching and learning looks like will be a never ending process, nor should it. Remember, fair isn’t always equal! “” Learning is the constant and time is the variable”, presents a systematic challenge for districts, as they rethink systems and structures based on individual students’ needs and instructional pacing” (Hess, Colby, & Joseph, p. 133, 2020).

Articulating a system of educational transformation supported by emergence and symmetry. As I review the mission of the Deeper Learning Dozen, “through a community of practice, to transform their school districts to support equitable access to deeper learning experiences and outcomes for all students and adults, through changes in leadership, school and district systems, adult learning, and pedagogy” (<https://www.deeperlearningdozen.org/about-us>). This collaboration allows them the autonomy to make the shift and thrive in educational settings through CoP’s. As a leader within my school, articulating a system of educational transformation supported by emergence and symmetry is ongoing. Progress is emerging, and a community of practice has been developed, as more teacher buy-in occurs. Shared leadership is emerging. Educators, like students are learning in this process. Symmetry between adults at Londonderry High School and the work that educators will do with students in these endeavors is parallel. The school as a whole is becoming a collaboration center. The school district doesn’t have one specific model for reassessing students when they do not learn the first time. I want assessments to be authentic and meaningful, while having “All” students being able to have the opportunity for achieving mastery. With the help of the Leaders Experimenting Exploring and Discovering Team (LEED), this attempt is reasonable (with the intent of implementing within the next year). These individuals recognize major shifts are necessary to transform learning environments to ones that are personalized and competency-based. “Leaders who create schools and districts capable of sustained substantive improvement are not laissez-faire in their approach to education but rather are skillful in implementing the concept of simultaneous loose and tight leadership. This leadership approach fosters autonomy and creativity (loose) within a systematic framework that stipulates clear, non-discretionary priorities and parameters (tight)” (In Praise of Top-Down Leadership. (n.d.). These discoverers are ready to move the school forward. This group will connect this idea with others, who are already doing similar things in their classrooms (best practice). Here, they can demonstrate an understanding in collaborative learning in an authentic setting. This is an opportunity to share their experiences, and shift into a community of practice. These LEED members are respected leaders of the school. These individuals are applying concepts that are transformative in looking to one’s role as a teacher/leader. “While these shift in systems can and should be led and owned by practitioners, they need leaders to forge shared purpose, create the space and the resources, and offer guidance and facilitation for this new work. New approaches are needed to provide the context within which these processes and systems can develop” (Deeper Learning Dozen White Paper, 2018).

A week ago, we had our first voluntary meeting, (open to all teachers in a specific room at a specific time), on this topic, and it was well received. As it moves to a CoP, time and space will be a non-factor. In order to move forward in a true CBE model, it is essential for students to have the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency at any time. During this meeting, members wanted information of others school procedures, as well as bringing on more “outside of school community members” to become more involved. Parents have been contacted about re-do’s from the middle school, but not the high school. In the future, before contact with the parents, I would like to find out more information from the middle school to avoid similar mistakes, as well as, improve on the positive conversations. Students have not been identified as having input on this endeavor. This is certainly an oversight and will be addressed through the LEED Team Google Classroom. After reading and sharing the article on “*Allowing Test Retakes-Without Getting Gamed*” (Merrill, 2019) and reviewing the CBE Readiness Tool (Levine & Patrick, 2019), student accountability is to be a top priority. The CBE Readiness Tool was useful to show the transformative skills and practices needed to make this shift. I know this will not be an easy task, but I do look forward to the quality discussions ahead.

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