

CREATIVE CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

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ABOUT ME

I am currently an assistant professor of education at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. I have over a decade of experience in social studies, language arts, language acquisition and technology as well as experience in professional development and teacher coaching. This last year, I got the chance to speak at the White House Future Ready Summit. My research experience includes writing a chapter in *The Nature of Technology* textbook and winning an award for my work and research around transforming professional development with blended learning.

Over the last three years, I have had the opportunity to share practical ideas and classroom stories with a variety of audiences. I've been honored to work with schools, districts and organizations through keynoting, workshops, sessions and coaching on the topics of creativity, digital literacy, technology, and student engagement.

As a teacher and a dad, I am passionate about students and teachers embracing creativity. I'm also a firm believer that there is a place for the fun in the classroom.

I often speak and consult on the topics of creativity and assessment. I have given workshops, keynotes, sessions and coaching on alternative assessment practices. My goal is to empower teachers to change what assessment looks like from a dirty word (associated with drill-and-kill tests) to something valuable, meaningful and fun. If you find this resource helpful and want to book me to speak or consult, simply email me at john@educationrethink.com.

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1. **Self-Reflection:** I typically use Google Forms, because they can also add specific metrics. I'm including self-reflection questions that teachers can use.
2. **Digital Portfolio Projects:** Here's a chance for students to show mastery, growth and future goal-setting.
3. **Concept Maps:** One thing I love about concept maps is that you get a chance to see what a student is thinking and what connections are being made. I'm including a sample concept map and a series of questions teachers can use with students.

Part Two: Peer Assessment

4. **The 20-Minute Feedback System:** This is a highly structured way to think about peer feedback. The goal is to get students to learn the art of questioning, listening, and analysis as they offer feedback on one another's work.
5. **Blog Comment Stems:** Here is a way for students to leave constructive feedback for their peers as they read blog posts.
6. **Math Discourse Stems:** Here students give audio feedback on work. They can use the voice recorder app. In some cases, students can post their work to social media (or an LMS).

Part Three: Teacher Assessment

7. **The Five-Minute Conference System:** Here are three different conference types that teachers can use. One is aimed at self-reflection, another at giving targeted help and a third at helping students make sense out of where they are according to the standards.
8. **Standards Mastery Grid:** This is a simple grid that allows students to make sense out of where they are according to the standards.
9. **Rubrics:** I'm a fan of [design thinking](#) and the idea of students developing an actual product to show what they are learning. We use rubrics and self-reflection questions through the various phases of the design thinking cycle. I'm including a sample rubric from our blog project.

**PART ONE:
SELF-ASSESSMENT**

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

FORMAT:

The first approach is to use these self-reflection questions in Google Forms. You can also add quantitative elements (such as “rate how you did on a scale of 1-10” or “Checkmark every word that describes how you feel about your work”). I love the fact that you can look at general trends throughout the class. In terms of timing, these work well as a warm-up, a mid-lesson break, or an exit slip. An alternative approach is to use these questions in the form of a blog.

QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about your work? What adjectives would you use to describe your feelings toward your finished product?
2. What would you improve if you had more time?
3. What are you the most proud of?
4. What did you learn along the way? Describe any new skills or concepts you acquired.
5. What did you learn about yourself based upon this experience?
6. What part was the hardest for you? Why?
7. What part was the easiest for you? Why?
8. Would you do something similar to this in your free time? Why or why not?
9. How could you build on this assignment or project in the future?
10. What are your next steps?

DIGITAL PORTFOLIO PROJECTS

THE BASICS

Premise:

Often when I think of assessment, I forget that it's not designed for the teacher. Ultimately, if I want students to become self-directed learners, I need an assessment method that includes student-selected work along with student self-reflections.

From my experience, the best method for authenticity is a portfolio. I love the idea of students curating their own work and sharing what they have learned in the journey of learning. Besides, the act of creating a portfolio becomes a transferrable skill that students can use with future creative endeavors.

For this type of portfolio, I encourage students to think the product and the process with a lens of growth and mastery. Students also look at what they learned along the way and what future steps they want to take.

Time Frame:

I have found that 3-5 class periods tend to work well. I prefer taking a whole week if it is a yearlong class and taking three days (combining page #1 with #4 and #5) for a semester-long course.

Favorite Site:

I prefer using Weebly because of the ease of adding media. However, this could work just as easily with Wix, Google Sites or customized WordPress.

COMPONENTS

Page #1: Home

The goal of a home page is to introduce who you are, along with the purpose of the portfolio. The following are a few things you might want to include:

- A photo or snippet of one of your works
- A short description of who you are including a few of your interests
- A list of skills you have gained in this field or subject
- A description of the purpose of the portfolio (showing your growth and your best work).
- A short description of your learning journey. What projects did you do? Who did you work with?

Page #2: Growth

Begin an introduction sharing how you have grown from the start of the course to the end of the course. Afterward, select at least two before and after examples (a total of four). The following questions might help guide you:

- Why does this newer work represent an area of growth for you? Cite specific examples of how you have improved.
- What were the hardest areas for you to master and why?
- In general, how has your work changed from the start to the finish?
- What obstacles did you face? How did you get past those obstacles?
- Which standard or standards does this work connect to? In what ways does it prove you grew in this standard?

Page #3: Best Work

Begin an introduction sharing what part of this course or subject you are currently excelling in. Afterward, select your top three examples of your best work. The following questions might help guide you:

- Why is this an example of your best work?
- What aspects of this work make you feel proud? What makes this work stand out?
- Which standard or standards does this work connect to? In what ways does it prove you are exceeding the standard?
- Did you find this work to be easy or hard to do? Why is that?
- What skills did you use in order to create this? In what ways can you build upon these skills in the future?

Page #4: What I Learned

Begin with an introduction of some of the basic skills you have learned. If possible, cite specific standards and your level of mastery. The following questions might help you along the way:

- What problems did you solve along the way?
- What skills have you learned? How can you apply these to other subjects?
- What concepts did you figure out?
- How did you contribute to group projects? What were your roles? What collaborative skills did you learn along the way?
- What did you learn about yourself in the process?

Page #5: Next Steps

Share with your audience what you plan to do next. The following questions might help you along the way:

- What are some areas that are still weaknesses for you? What will you do to continue to grow in these areas?
- What future goals do you have connected to this subject or topic? List the goals and keep them specific.
- How do you plan to use this in life? Cite actual examples.

CONCEPT MAPS

THE BASICS

A concept map, also called a “mind map,” is a visual demonstration of how concepts or ideas are connected. I love using concept maps to get a general idea of what a student is thinking and what connections he or she is making. There are great online concept map platforms. However, I have seen some amazing hand-drawn concept maps as well.

The following is an example:



Reflection Questions for Concept Maps:

1. What connections do you see? Describe the relationships.
2. How did you organize your concept map?
3. What symbols did you use? What did they represent?
4. What colors did you use? What did they represent?

**PART TWO:
PEER ASSESSMENT**

THE TWENTY-MINUTE FEEDBACK SYSTEM

Sometimes the best answer for peer feedback is through a quick, timed structure. The way this works is simple. Members from different groups pair up and engage in a five-step process. Each step takes two minutes. You, as a teacher, can keep a timer going and say, “next” when it is time to move to the next phase. In the first phase, the first partner gives an “elevator pitch” sharing the product. Next, the second partner asks clarifying questions while the first partner answers the questions. The rule is that there cannot be any feedback given. It has to be question and answer. Afterward, they move into the feedback stage, where the second partner gives specific feedback. This is followed by paraphrasing. Finally, they land on next steps. When this is done, the partners switch roles.

Part One:

Time	Phase	Description	Partner A:	Partner B:
0-2	Elevator Pitch	Partner A explains the process, product or idea in two minutes	Explain your process, product or idea	Take notes on what you are hearing or listen actively
2-4	Clarifying Questions	Partner B asks clarifying questions without giving any feedback	Answer clarifying questions	Ask clarifying questions
4-6	Feedback	Partner B gives feedback to Partner A	Take notes on specific feedback you have gotten	Offer feedback in the form of two things that worked well and one idea for an improvement
6-8	Paraphrase	Partner A paraphrases what he or she has heard from Partner B	Paraphrase what you have heard	Listen to see if the paraphrased information is correct
8-10	Next Steps	Partner A makes a list of future revisions	Make a list of future revisions	Check the list of revisions

Part Two:

Time	Phase	Description	Partner A:	Partner B:
10-12	Elevator Pitch	Partner B explains the process, product or idea in	Take notes on what you are hearing or listen actively	Explain your process, product or idea

		two minutes		
12-14	Clarifying Questions	Partner A asks clarifying questions without giving any feedback	Ask clarifying questions	Answer clarifying questions
14-16	Feedback	Partner A gives feedback to Partner B	Offer feedback in the form of two things that worked well and one idea for an improvement	Take notes on specific feedback you have gotten
16-18	Paraphrase	Partner B paraphrases what he or she has heard from Partner A	Listen to see if the paraphrased information is correct	Paraphrase what you have heard
18-20	Next Steps	Partner B makes a list of future revisions	Check the list of revisions	Make a list of future revisions

PEER FEEDBACK: BLOG COMMENT STEMS

COMMENTS AS QUESTIONS

Why did you _____?

What made you think of writing _____?

Have you considered _____?

Is it possible that _____?

Have you considered the possibility that _____?

I was wondering why _____?

COMMENTS AS STATEMENTS

Agree / Disagree

I agree that _____ because _____.

I disagree with your thought that _____ because _____.

Clarifying

I was a little confused about _____. Could you explain _____?

Adding Your Thoughts

I really enjoyed _____ about your post. (Add thoughts afterward)

You mentioned that _____. This had me thinking _____.

You bring up the problem _____. I think a solution might be _____.

COMMENTS AS PARAGRAPHS

Paragraph #1 – Agree / Disagree

I agree with _____ but I'm wondering if _____ is also true. I feel this way about _____, because _____.

What do you think about that?

Paragraph #2 – Questioning / Adding Additional Thoughts

I feel _____ about your thoughts on _____. What you said about _____ had me wondering about _____. Have you considered _____?

Paragraph #3 – Quoting the Post

You mentioned, "quote the post." I agree/disagree with this, because _____.

Paragraph #4 – Adding Your Own Thoughts

I agree with _____. I also think (give your own thoughts).

PEER FEEDBACK: MATH DISCOURSE QUESTIONS

THE BASICS:

I love using these questions in blogs or on social networks (or learning management systems). Students post their work and then engage in meaningful discourse about their learning and their processes. The following is a set of math discourse stems that I use:

Clarifying

What process did you use?

Why did you choose to use that process?

Why did you choose that step? (find a specific step)

What clues helped you find that?

Can you explain what you were thinking?

What part was challenging for you? How did you get past the challenge?

Analytical Questions

Why does your process work? Is there a scenario where that might not work?

What can you do to prove to me that your process was correct?

Is there another way to look at this?

How did you arrive at that conclusion?

Is there a more efficient way to do this process?

Diagnostic Questions (If You're Stuck)

What did you do to get to that point?

What part are you struggling with?

Is there another strategy you can use from another math process?

Can you predict the answer and work backward?

What do you already know? Can you build on this?

What information are you missing?

**PART THREE:
TEACHER ASSESSMENT**

THE FIVE-MINUTE CONFERENCING SYSTEM

To be honest, I hate the word system. I guess it's because it feels rigid and systematic and I like things that are flexible and organic. However, systems are all around. Everything we do is a part of a system. Some of the best systems are the ones that work as a framework or a structure to allow things to thrive. That's my hope with this system. My hope is that it works as a framework that you can modify and adjust to meet the needs of your students.

The Five-Minute Conferencing System is a simple idea. Over the course of a lesson, a teacher finds small five-minute fragments for one-on-one student conferences. I've seen the following benefits:

1. The teacher gets the chance to know the students on a more personal level. This allows for a better approach to differentiated instruction.
2. Students feel known on a deeper level, which then increases trust. This, in turn, leads to a higher level of student self-efficacy and helps prevent discipline issues.
3. Students are empowered to ask questions about their work and to reflect upon both the product and the process. My students tend to know how they are doing in my class because of the weekly conferences.
4. This saves time for the teacher. Every conference is essentially a chance for ongoing formative assessment. As a result, I spend less time grading (especially leaving feedback on student work).
5. It allows me to thrive as an introverted teacher. I need this time one-on-one with students because the large crowd can feel exhausting.

How to Approach It

Here are some of the practical / logistical things I have found with this:

- Find the best moments where kids can be talking to each other while working independently. This allows for the class to work at a buzzing, not-too-loud noise level while I talk to students individually. I find that the warm-up and project times work best for this.
- Find the right location. I have a spot in front of the board where I have a standing center. I look out at the class and stand directly next to the student in the conference. We share a laptop computer screen as we discuss the questions.
- Give students specific days when they know they will have a conference. This allows students to feel prepared ahead of time.
- I usually plan for 6 students per day.

The Timing

In a self-contained class (all of the students for an entire day), it should be possible to meet with each student once a week. To do this, take the number of students you have and divide it by four. This allows you to have a make-up day on Friday. So, if you have 30 students, plan for seven per day on two days and

eight per day on two other days. Thirty-five minutes can seem like a long time but when spread out among an entire day, it becomes manageable.

In a departmentalized class, it becomes much more reasonable to meet with students once every two weeks. I find that it works best to divide the number by ten and then do one make-up per day on top of that. So, a group of thirty students becomes 3 students per class period. Even in a short class period, I find that I still have 15 minutes to spare.

The Three Types of Conferences

The following are the three types of conferences I use with students:

- **Advice Conference:** This conference is all about learning specific skills that students are missing. Each student must ask the teacher a series of questions based upon an area where he or she is struggling. This is a chance for targeted one-on-one attention and explicit help with a strategy. Students guide the process, tapping into the teacher's expertise. This has the added bonus of encouraging students to embrace the idea that mistakes as a part of the learning process. It sets up a classroom culture where every student must be humble enough to admit that they are still struggling in some area of reading.
- **Reflection Conferences:** Instead of telling students what to do, the goal is to draw out student reflection. The teacher uses a series of reflective questions to lead students through the process of meta-cognition and into the setting and monitoring of goals. As the year progresses, the teacher asks fewer follow-up questions and the students begin sharing how they are doing without the aid of pre-chosen questions.
- **Assessment Conference:** Unlike the reflection conference, the focus here is less about reflecting on the process and more about students judging their own mastery of the content. We use the Standards-Based Assessment Grid (attached to this folder) as a way to figure out the level of mastery on particular standards.

THE THREE TYPES OF CONFERENCES

	Feedback Conference	Reflection Conference	Assessment Conference
The Focus	Targeted help / instruction in specific areas of reading	Guiding students toward self-reflection	A conversation about the mastery of standards
Role of the Student	Ask questions and seek out specific feedback	Answer questions and reflect on his or her learning	Talk about progress toward specific standards
Role of the Teacher	Answer questions with accuracy and precision and allow for students to practice a strategy under supervision	Ask questions, paraphrase answers and guide students toward self-reflection	Asks questions about progress and share information based upon evidence of student work.
Further Application	Students leave with actionable steps to fix a particular work	Students can select the strategies and plan for future improvement based upon self-reflection.	Students can figure out what standards still need to be mastered and how to get there
Role in Cultivating a Growth Mindset	Every student has a chance to admit to failure and learn from it	Every student has a chance to articulate areas where they are growing and where they still need to grow	Every student is able to realize that there are as many retakes as necessary until they master the standards

Advice Conferences

In the advice conferences, each student comes up with questions and asks specialized advice. Students look for specific feedback and focus on either getting critical feedback or finding solutions to a problem. It also allows the teacher to see issues that might be more intensive and require targeted tutoring.

The advice conferences help promote the mindset that every student in class still has room to grow. Instead of waiting for a teacher to say if something is right or wrong, students learn the art of asking for help. While we do not want students to become helpless and dependent, this conference style allows students to ask specific questions and seek out specific feedback from the teacher.

Sometimes these conversations begin with examining student work. Here, students might come with a list of clarifying questions that they realize need improvement. Other times, it might be a concept that they are still struggling with.

The following question stems can be a great help for students.

- I am having a hard time with _____ part of _____. Are you seeing the same thing?
- Could you show me how to _____?
- I'm going to practice _____ and I'd like you to tell me what you are noticing that I might be missing.
- I'm stuck with _____. What resources would you recommend for me?
- How could I improve on _____?
- I tried to do _____, but it wasn't working. What am I missing?
- When I _____, I sometimes have a hard time with _____. How do I get past this?
- I'm still really confused with _____, because _____.

Student Handout: Advice Conferences

Have you ever needed to ask your teacher for help but you were too scared? Or maybe you were wanting to ask for help but others were taking up his or her time? Well, now is your chance! Your teacher will be calling you up for an advice conference.

You will need to get your work (whether it is digital or paper) and take it with you to the conference. You will also need to think about specific advice you want to ask about. You might want to use the following stems:

- I am having a hard time with _____ part of _____. Are you seeing the same thing?
- Could you show me how to _____?
- I'm going to practice _____ and I'd like you to tell me what you are noticing that I might be missing.
- I'm stuck with _____. What resources would you recommend for me?
- How could I improve on _____?
- I tried to do _____, but it wasn't working. What am I missing?
- When I _____, I sometimes have a hard time with _____. How do I get past this?
- I'm still really confused with _____, because _____.

After the Conference:

List three next steps you want to take to improve your work.

1.

2.

3.

Reflection Conferences

The goal of a reflection conference is not about providing correction or giving practical ideas. Instead, the teacher asks reflective questions that encourage students to think about their learning. The following is a general guideline of how the reflection conferences work:

The conferences typically start out with the teacher reminding the student of the purpose of the conference (reflection). Next, it moves toward a discussion about strengths and weaknesses. It's important here that the teacher doesn't add any strengths or weaknesses. The goal is simply to get the student thinking, reflecting, and sharing. It ends with an articulation of goals and a plan for next steps. So, the general trajectory of the conversation moves from vague and personal to specific and practical.

In this conversation, it is important to avoid any type of feedback. We do not talk about scores or grades or the rubrics they have filled out. This can be tricky at first. Sometimes students are afraid of saying the "wrong" thing and will ask, "Is that right?" They might hedge their self-reflection with phrases like, "I don't really know, but maybe . . ." However, the more they engage in reflection conversations the more they grow confident in their ability to self-reflect.

The following are some of the questions that I ask students in the this style of conference:

- What are some of the strategies that you have mastered? Why do you feel this way?
- In what area are you still struggling with?
- Describe your process when you _____. What is happening?
- What I'm hearing you say is _____. Is that accurate?
- Where are you growing? Are there any areas that you don't see growth?
- How do you feel _____ is going? Is it turning out the way you had planned?
- What are some things you are noticing about _____?
- In terms of _____, what will success look like?
- What are you hoping to learn?
- What is an area where you would like to improve? What are some steps you will need to make to reach that?

Student Handout: Reflection Conferences

You will be participating in a reflection conference. The idea here is to think about how you are doing in this class. Your teacher will be asking you about your strengths and weaknesses and from there you will be able to talk about trends you see. Finally, you'll think of the next steps you can take. The following are some of the questions that I ask students in the coaching conversations:

- What are some of the strategies that you have mastered? Why do you feel this way?
- In what area are you still struggling with?
- Describe your process when you _____. What is happening?
- What I'm hearing you say is _____. Is that accurate?
- Where are you growing? Are there any areas that you don't see growth?
- How do you feel _____ is going? Is it turning out the way you had planned?
- What are some things you are noticing about _____?
- In terms of _____, what will success look like?
- What are you hoping to learn?
- What is an area where you would like to improve? What are some steps you will need to make to reach that?

After the Conference:

Strengths	Weaknesses

Next Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Assessment Conferences

The goal of an assessment conference is to examine student work (including rubrics and self-assessments) and have a conversation about mastery of standards. While the Advice Conferences involve students asking questions of the teacher and the Reflection Conferences involve the opposite, these conversations tend to be more of a give-and-take.

Sometimes it works best to start with asking students what they feel they have earned and why. Other times, it helps to start with an open grade book and the question, "Do you feel this is accurate?" Still, other times, it works best to examine a project rubric filled out by both the teacher and the student and then compare and contrast perceptions. I have also included a template for the Standards-Based Assessment Grid. This is a document I have used in assessment conferences when I wanted to focus to be on specific standards.

Ultimately, the goal is for students to know which standards they have mastered and where they need to go from there.

The following are some of the questions that I ask students in the assessment conferences:

- How do you feel that you have done on this standard? What level of mastery would you give yourself? Why?
- Is this an accurate representation of what you have learned?
- Which standards do you need to focus on in order to improve? What help do you need? Where will you look?
- Which standards are you excelling at? What kind of enrichment would you like to pursue in those areas?
- How will you know when you have mastered (name the standard)?
- What are the next steps you need to take in order to master (name the standard)?

Student Handout: Assessment Conferences

You will be examining your work as you have a conversation about the mastery of standards. You might be looking at a project rubric or a self-assessment or perhaps even a progress report. The goal is for you to figure out where you still need help, where you could move to a higher level of proficiency and where you can build upon your expertise.

Here are some of the questions your teacher might ask you:

- How do you feel that you have done on this standard? What level of mastery would you give yourself? Why?
- Is this an accurate representation of what you have learned?
- Which standards do you need to focus on in order to improve? What help do you need? Where will you look?
- Which standards are you excelling at? What kind of enrichment would you like to pursue in those areas?
- How will you know when you have mastered (name the standard)?
- What are the next steps you need to take in order to master (name the standard)?

After the Conference:

What is one standard where you are struggling? What are two things you will do to master this standard?

What is one standard where you are exceeding? What enrichment do you want to do to take it to the next level?

STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENT GRID

Prerequisite Skills:

1. I can _____
2. I can _____
3. I can _____

Level of Mastery

Objective	Level of Mastery	Student Feedback	Teacher Feedback
<i>Example: I can generate clarifying questions</i>	<i>Example: Meets the Standards</i>	<i>Example: "I have an easy time making clarifying questions but I sometimes don't know why I need to create these questions."</i>	<i>Example: "Your clarifying questions are well-crafted but you don't seem to seek out answers to the questions."</i>

BLOGGING RUBRIC

Please fill out the following rubric as you assess your finished blog. Be honest about the work that you have done and where you might need to grow.

RESEARCH

Category	Falls Far Below	Approaches	Meets	Exceeds
Inquiry	I was unable to generate my own inquiry questions	I was able to generate inquiry questions based upon teacher examples	I was able to generate inquiry questions using sentence stems	I was able to generate my own inquiry questions
Research	I was unable to find original sources and summarize information in my own words	I was able to find sources, but was not able to summarize information in my own words	I was able to find sources and summarize information in my own words	I was able to find multiple sources and compare their validity while summarizing them in my own words
Communication	I was unable to share my questions and answers with my peers.	I was able to ask and answer questions about my research with the use of stems.	I was able to develop my own questions and answers without the teacher's help.	I was able to engage in an ongoing conversation of questions and answers without the teacher's help.

BLOG POSTS

Category	Falls Far Below	Approaches	Meets	Exceeds
Voice	My passion, interest and knowledge is not evident in my posts.	My passion, interest and knowledge come across on occasion in my posts.	My passion, interest and knowledge are evident in most of my posts.	My passion, interest and knowledge are evident in each post, almost to the point of being contagious.
Visuals / Format	My posts did not have engaging titles or Creative Commons visuals	My posts had fairly engaging titles and some of them had Creative Commons visuals that connected to my topic.	My posts had engaging titles and most of them had Creative Commons visuals that related to my post topic.	My posts had engaging titles and Creative Commons visuals that enhanced the meaning of my post
Mechanics	The grammar and mechanics make it hard to read.	The grammar and mechanics are okay, but there are many mistakes throughout.	The grammar and mechanics are solid, with a few mistakes scattered throughout.	The grammar and mechanics are nearly flawless, giving it a published feel.
Information	My information was not accurate or relevant. I was off-topic.	My information was mostly accurate and somewhat relevant.	My information was accurate and relevant.	My information was thought-provokingly relevant and my sources were cited.
Communication	I did not engage my readers in a conversation when they left comments.	I kept my follow-up comments to a minimum.	I responded to all comments with follow-up comments.	I engaged my readers with questions and answers, keeping the conversation lively.

4. What part was the hardest for you? Why?

5. What part was the easiest for you? Why?

6. What are the next steps you would take if you continued to blog?

7. Will you continue to post to your blog? Why or why not?