Task 3: Assessing Student Learning

Part C: Assessment Commentary

Directions

1. Save a copy of this file on your personal computer and name it **ELA_Assessment_Comm_template**.
2. Type your response to each prompt into this file where indicated below.
3. Format your response in Arial 11 pt single spaced text with 1” page margins.
4. Limit your response to **no more than 8 pages total including prompts. Scorers will not read beyond page 8.**
5. If the directions and/or prompts for the assessment are not shown on the student work samples, insert them along with the evaluation criteria (**2 pages maximum**) at the end of the Assessment commentary.
6. Save your file in one of the following formats: .doc, .docx, .odt, .pdf
7. Submit your file electronically.

1. **Analyzing Student Learning**

   Identify the specific standards/objectives and central focus from the learning segment measured by the assessment chosen for analysis. Describe any changes from what was planned for this assessment as described in the lesson plans or in prompt 6 of Task 1, Part C: Planning Commentary.

   a. Respond to the prompts below to create a summary of student learning relative to your evaluation criteria.
      i. Summarize student performance in narrative and/or graphic form (e.g., table or chart).
      ii. Discuss what students appear to understand well and where they continue to struggle, including any misunderstandings, errors, confusions, or needs (including a need for greater challenge).
      iii. Consider common patterns across the class as well as groups of students with similar strengths or needs. Cite evidence to support your analysis from the 3 student work samples you selected.

   b. Respond to the prompts below by referencing your understanding of the 2 focus students:
      i. Describe each student’s individual learning strengths and challenges relative to the standards/objectives measured by the chosen assessment. Consider your knowledge of each student (e.g., prior knowledge of the content, language development, academic development, and/or special needs).
      ii. After analyzing each student’s work sample, what conclusions did you make regarding their individual learning? Cite specific evidence to support your conclusions.

a. i. The class showed a wide range of performance on this writing assignment. Some factors that appear to have influenced student performance include ELL or special needs status, motivation and class engagement, and number of absences from school.
Between two sections of this class (25 total students) grade distribution was fairly even, with somewhat higher concentrations of students achieving A and C grades. No students received a D on this assignment, and no students failed.

Because of the large amount of time devoted to the process of revision while working on this essay, a significant portion of the students’ grades were assessed by looking at the students’ revisions to their essays on the GoogleDrive Revision History feature. I noticed that most students either put a good deal of effort into their revisions or almost none. This could account for the higher concentrations of students achieving A and C grades and the somewhat smaller number of students who earned a B.

Almost all students demonstrated understanding of the basic five-paragraph essay format and included an introduction, conclusion, and three body paragraphs. Most also demonstrated good understanding of the necessary components of each type of paragraph, successfully including, for example, an attention-getter and preview of body paragraphs in the introduction and a brief summary in the conclusion. Most students also included topic sentences in their body paragraphs.

Other elements of paragraph construction appeared to be understood by many students, but not a majority. For example, many students struggled to include specific examples to support the statements in their body paragraphs or demonstrated a lack of organization or body paragraphs without clearly distinguished topics.

Among the areas where students almost universally continue to struggle are run-on sentences and comma use. No students handed in papers free of these mechanical errors, and this demonstrates a clear need for further attention to finding and correcting these kinds of errors in writing.

I noticed that ELL students in this class tended to demonstrate more mechanical errors. For example, Sample 1, from a low-level ELL student, contains many mechanical errors with run-on sentences, comma use, capitalization, and word declension; Sample 2 rom a high-level ELL student also contains errors in sentence construction and word usage.
Though Sample 3 comes from a student less motivated than either of the other two, his essay has relatively few mechanical errors, likely due to his status as a native English speaker.

Another trend I saw in these essays has to do with motivation level. Highly motivated students of whatever academic ability level tended to show consistent performance at all stages of the project; students of lower motivation often produced strong final drafts but performed poorly in their reflection, pre-writing, and revising. This is evident from Sample 3, where a student with low motivation produced a mechanically decent draft but demonstrated very little reflection or concern with revision.

b.

i. 

Sample 1: The student who wrote Sample Essay 1 is a low-level ELL student who began the school year with low motivation and a high number of school absences. When I explained to him that his absences and poor in-class work would result in his being removed from the class (students at AVHS receive no credit for a class when they are absent for ten or more class periods, at the discretion of the teacher) he began applying himself and engaging more with the material.

Student 1’s increased motivation helped him to do a lot to revise his essay, making it stronger in terms of paragraph- and essay construction. This motivation is a clear strength for him. On the other hand, his relatively low language ability makes sentence construction and word declension difficult. His relatively low language ability also causes him to expend greater effort on mechanics, sometimes at the expense of other elements of writing.

Sample 3: The student who wrote the third work sample has ADHD and exhibits low motivation. He frequently complains about having to complete work in class. The difficulty focusing related to his ADHD makes this motivation difficult for Student 3. While choosing a topic about which he was passionate (his stepfather) led to some apparent improvement in his motivation, he quickly lost interest in the project.

ADHD and the related distractability and unsustained focus were a clear disadvantage for this student. When I gave him feedback on his rough draft, he was unable to make significant changes. A related struggle for this student was his belief that his first draft was close to perfect. He was reluctant to acknowledge problems in his writing (note what he wrote in his reflection [Sample 3 Page 4] “The whole thing was good”), perhaps because he was not interested in putting in the work to revise them.

Student 3’s strength is his comfortability with the English language. Though not mechanically perfect, as a native English speaker, Student 3 had relatively strong spelling, grammar, and punctuation. He was also able to focus his efforts on paragraph construction and spend less time thinking about grammar and mechanics.
ii. **Student 1:** Student 1 built a greater understanding of the functions of introduction and conclusion paragraphs. This is evidenced by the attention-getter he added during the revision period of his essay: “Do you have a hero? Here is mine” and the final sentence of his conclusion in which he leaves the reader with another question. He also demonstrated increased proficiency with commas, which can be seen in the long compound sentence in his second body paragraph (the class studied commas in compound sentences after the revision unit).

Student 1 also demonstrates gaps in his learning, including the use of topic sentences to begin body paragraphs. I hypothesize that Student 1’s low language ability made some learning goals unreachable at this time, because his language difficulties caused him to focus more on mechanical basics and because he may have found it difficult to understand class material when it was presented.

**Student 3:** Student 3 also demonstrated some learning about paragraph construction. He added a topic sentence to one of his body paragraphs that was missing one in revision and, in comparison to his first essay of the course, wrote three body paragraphs with three distinct subtopics.

Student 3’s low motivation, however, resulted in his learning being rather low. He sometimes refused to participate in lesson activities and more frequently refused to try activities at which he was not already proficient.

2. **Feedback to Guide Further Learning**
   a. In what form did you submit your evidence of feedback (e.g., written directly on work samples, in audio files, a time stamp reference for video clip(s) in the Instruction task)? If submitted via video for Task 2, provide the time stamp here.
   b. How did feedback provided to each focus student address individual student’s needs and learning objectives? Reference specific evidence of submitted feedback to support your explanation.
   c. What opportunities were/will be provided for students to apply the feedback to improve their work, either within the learning segment or at a later time?

a) Feedback was both written directly on the work and on a separate rubric sheet returned to the student with the essay.

b) **Student 1:** My feedback to Student 1 first praises his efforts on revision (“I was especially impressed with the revisions you made to this essay”), which were one of his greatest strengths on this project. Because his strong effort in class is a key and yet relatively new skill, it was important to praise, thereby positively reinforcing it. I also praised other evidences of learning in my feedback, further examples of positive reinforcement (“Good attention getter,” “Nice comma in a compound sentence!”). My feedback also addresses unmet learning objectives. For example, I point out run-on sentences and incorrect grammar, and I call attention to missing topic sentences.

**Student 3:** On Student 3’s essay, I began by praising what he had done well, again including positive reinforcement (“Great topic sentences!”). I also drew attention to areas that were not met: “I’m disappointed in your revisions. You didn’t make any large-scale
Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA)
Secondary English–Language Arts

changes.” Because motivation is an issue for this student, I also made an explicit invitation in the feedback to come talk to me (“Would it be helpful to sit down and go over those again?”). Student 3 also wrote some responses in his guided reflection (pages 4 & 5) that were disrespectful to another student. I chose to also address this in my feedback, because a respectful attitude in the classroom is essential to learning for all students.

c) Students have the opportunity to apply the feedback from this assignment to their third essay for the course and to their final exam, which will ask students to revise a piece of writing they completed on the second day of school this year. Students will be encouraged to review the feedback on this essay before completing each of these large assignments.

3. Using Assessment to Inform Instruction
For the prompts below, consider what you know about your students and the effectiveness of your instruction when designing next steps. Be sure to connect your next steps to your analysis of the student performances.

a. Based on your analysis of student performance in the assessment, describe next steps for instruction for the whole class.

b. Describe any individualized next steps for the 2 focus students.

c. Explain how these next steps follow from your analysis of the student performances.

a) Because I noticed that the class almost universally struggled with run-on sentences and comma use in this assignment, I decided to focus activities in the following week on a review of run-on sentence identification and correction. I organized an activity in which students created flash cards with run-on sentences from their own essays, writing the run-on on one side and correcting it on the back. Then, students exchanged flash cards and spent time correcting one another’s run-on sentences and checking themselves against the corrected back of the card.

b) While I did not create any individualized next steps for Student 1, Student 3 clearly needed specific intervention. On the day I handed back the essays, Student 3 was visibly disappointed with his score and acted angry by stuffing the essay away and refusing to speak to me. I asked the paraprofessional who works in our class to try speaking to him, and Student 3 was willing to talk to her. She reiterated my feedback about motivation and engagement. In subsequent days, Student 3 calmed down. Since that time I have been checking in with him more frequently to try to encourage engagement.

c) The next steps for the whole class follow my observation that the class as a whole struggled with run-on sentences more than any other feature of sentence construction. Moreover, unlike some minor mechanical errors that, while problematic, do not pose a serious obstacle to understanding in the reader, run-on sentences can be seriously distracting and need to be addressed when they appear in student writing.

My next steps for Student 3 follow from my observation that his low level of motivation is a large barrier to his learning. He demonstrates reasonably proficient writing mechanics but does not challenge himself or work to improve his writing because of his poor motivation. It is essential to his learning that this be addressed.
4. Evidence of Academic Language

(NOTE: You may provide evidence of academic language with your video clip(s) in Task 2 OR through the student work samples analyzed in this task. If your evidence of the key language demand is well represented in the student work samples, then respond to the prompts below. Otherwise, respond to prompt 4 in Task 2, Part B: Instruction Commentary. You must provide this evidence in at least one of the two available tasks.)

a. Describe evidence from the student work samples that demonstrates the extent to which students are able to understand and/or use the language associated with the identified language demand (vocabulary, function/form, and instructional language) in ways that develop literacy skills and strategies.

b. Using this evidence, how well did your language supports or scaffolding promote academic language development for students with varied language levels.

a) Students used academic language to describe parts of their papers on their guided reflection sheets (green pages in all three student work samples). For example, Student 1 mentions his “introduction,” that he added “more paragraph [sic] to the bodies” and had “a very good conclusion [sic].”

Student 2 uses this academic language sophisticatedly to reflect on her own writing: when asked what was difficult about writing the essay, she answered, “The body paragraphs, because I needed to add more detail but I didn’t want to get off topic;” when asked what she could have done better in this essay, she answered, “The conclusion. I think I could have summarized the 3 points better;” finally, when asked what she would like to work on next in the class, she wrote, “Having more ways to introduce the topic in the 3 paragraphs (transitions).”

Being able to use academic vocabulary to talk about writing is important for students of writing, because it allows them to engage in the above type of reflection and thus understand their own growth and potential as writers.

b) Students with higher language abilities tended to also latch on to the new academic language more quickly and more proficiently. As evidenced in the above discussed examples, some students demonstrate basic comprehension of the terms; others show deeper understanding of their meanings. However at both levels, this academic language is useful for students in their own writing and in the classroom when writing is being discussed.

My supports for students’ academic language, including in-class note taking that incorporated the terms, worksheets like the guided reflection that asked students to use these terms, and frequent use and explanation in my own spoken language in class, were effective in transmitting this vocabulary to students.