Assessment in a Thinking Classroom

Roundtable Discussion With Peter from Mathodology

Homework:

- There is a pervasive practice amongst mathematical practice: “The students need to do this independent work.”
    - Is it working?
    - How effective is it?
    - What are students actually doing when the teacher assigns homework?
- The data proves that it is ineffective.
- Teachers assign homework because they want students to check their understanding. Students do not view homework for the same purpose. They do it because it’s graded. There is a huge miscommunication going on.

CYU:

- Change the name to Check Your Understanding questions. Peter’s research says that 80% of students choose to participate in CYU which is remarkably higher than the number of students who participate in homework.
- This looks very different at K-2 (although this process is not fully described in the video).
- “Here are some questions for you to check your understanding.”
- Start with fewer questions, like two. Then gradually increase to three. Then it’s six questions and ask, “Choose which ones you need to do to check your understanding.”
- “What did you learn from the Check Your Understanding questions? Does anyone have any questions about your Check Your Understanding questions. What did you learn about yourself?”

Rubrics:

- Evaluation is a double edged sword. When we evaluate our students our students evaluate us. What we choose to evaluate shows what it is we value.
- Typical rubrics are confusing and unhelpful and possibly a barrier to communicating with students. Student: “I don’t really know how to go from ‘mostly’ to ‘usually.’” If the student can’t decode it, it’s useless.
- Co-construct expectations using a T-chart. “What does good ___ look like? What does bad ____ look like?” (Peter admits that students found “good” and “bad” most useful.)
- Evaluate the behavior as needed. The rubric is not created ahead of time by the teacher.

Assessing Standards:

- Use three categories of proficiency within an outcome.
- Headings that describe the complexity of the task are more effective than headings that describe the proficiency of the learner. Label the math, not the learner.
- It’s more powerful if the student identifies where he/she is on the rubric (assessment grid).
- Assessment is fundamentally about communication. How you choose to assess is communicating strongly to students how you want them to behave. If you assess in

really effective ways you can fundamentally change student behavior for the positive. If we're not careful in our assessment we can shift that behavior in a negative way.