

The Art of Thin Slicing, Three Types & Assessment

[Adding to the Equation Podcast](#)

Peter's recent focus

- The closing of the lesson - to help transfer the collective knowing and doing to individual knowing and doing but also help students organize their thoughts that are emerging in the meaning making process.
- Meaning making is messy. The closing is important to bring order to the chaos. We have to help them clean it up.

Three types of consolidation

- A conversation is when we talk about what happened that day. It's the most common form of consolidation when we start doing building thinking classrooms in social studies, language arts, etc. We can also do this in math. What were the big ideas?
- A teacher scribe is when the teacher puts a question on the board, the students describe what to do with the question, and the teacher scribes what the students say.
- The gallery walk is powerful but really only works with divergent tasks.
- What's the point in a gallery walk if all the work looks the same?
 - Put up three different questions from the lesson and ask students to put them in order. What order should they be in and why?

Teachers want tasks

- We don't need more tasks.
- What we need to do is use the tasks we already have but use them in a way that gets students thinking.
- A task is inert. It takes pedagogy to bring it to life.
- Whether a task is a thinking task or not is due to how you bring it to life and the relationship with that task and a student.
- When teachers say they want more tasks, what they really want to know is which tasks are good to use with their students in a thinking way.
- Textbooks are full of those tasks. We tend to suck the thinking out of those tasks by pre-teaching how to do them.

The art of thin slicing

- Thin slicing is creating a sequence of tasks for taking students from where they are to where you want to get them to.
- You plan on the assumption that students know how and launch on the assumption that they don't.

- How can I start the journey in a way that every student can participate and then how can I gradually increase the complexity so I don't lose anybody. The next step is just a little bit different than the last step. They were successful at the last one so they can do the next one. They have early success and that motivates them to keep going.
- Decompose the path into three types.
 - The three types will be apparent in consolidation, notes, and CYU.

Note making

- If we do I write, you write, less than 10% are cognitively engaged and less than 10% look back at the notes.
- If we want notes to be a record, they need to be accurate. If students are not cognitively present, the notes aren't accurate. They're full of errors.
- The act of writing notes *can* be a learning process but only if students are cognitively present.
- With Peter's first note making practices 60 - 80% of students were cognitively present and looking back at notes, but it was an equity problem with 20 to 40% of students who were opting out.
- Just because kids are making bad choices, doesn't absolve us of the responsibility of doing better.
- 100% participation occurs with the newest note making practices.

Starting out

- Do not bank your professional learning. Ever. Don't save it up for September.
- You want September to go well but start playing with it now so you know how it will look in September. This is your sandbox. Play with it.
- Find your efficiencies. Figure out the details, the nuances, the micromoves. Then you know exactly what you want it to look like on the first day of school.
- If you read the book now and bank that for the start of the year, you're going in blind. You'll change things 15 times in the first week. It might not have the same effect.
- The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time to plant a tree is today.

Non-curricular tasks

- If you want to shift student behavior or your own, it is safe to do so in the context of a non-curricular task. It feels playful so it's a safer place to take risks. The kids are more relaxed. They're having a good time. You can start to focus on pedagogy. Students can focus on behaviors. You can have really rich

conversations around the types of behaviors that you want students to exhibit and set those patterns when shifting back into curriculum.

- There is curricular potential in a non-curricular task.

Professional development

- A professional learning community is Peter's second favorite form of PD.
- His favorite is two teachers on the same journey having the opportunity to talk to each other.
- Find a thought partner. Start talking.
- It's a microcosm of the classroom.

Assessment

- Culture, history, and tradition are powerful stabilizers of practice. Most of what we do about assessment is what was done to us.
- Part of the reason why we have quizzes and tests is because we're gathering points for columns in the grade book. They also serve as a stick or a carrot to motivate students to do the "learning." It's being used to keep them on track or teachers on track, when it comes to standardized assessments. Is that really what the purpose is? When actually our job is to report student attainment of curricular content. It is not to report out how many points they manage to collect.
- Point gathering to data gathering is central to the shift from events based grading to outcomes based grading. It's not about how many points they collect. It's about which outcomes have they mastered and have they been able to evidence how many they mastered.
- Differentiated assessment - It's about trying to see what learning has actually happened, and learning looks different for every student.
- We're trying to get to a 21st century view of grading and assessment through a 19th century traditional toolkit. We need a different toolkit to get there. We can use the gradebook organized by events to get there.
- Look at the back of a baseball card. There are stats based on how that player performs on very discreet skills. They don't average that out and say they're a 74 or a B+.