7 strategies for introducing self-assessment in your classroom

Self-assessment is a powerful learning strategy. Students who can assess their own learning are more effective learners. They are more motivated and engaged, have a greater belief that they can succeed, and are able to adapt their approach if learning is not working. Assessment-capable students show higher achievement. While in the long-term self-assessment facilitates self-directed learning by students, establishing successful self-assessment requires considerable input by teachers. It needs sustained direct teaching on how to do it and follow-up support. Teachers also need to set the right conditions in the classroom so that students are not threatened by feeling judged.

The following seven suggestions can help you to develop effective self-assessment processes in your classroom

1. *Explain the benefits of self-assessment*
   Students who are more convinced of the learning benefits of self-assessment and feel supported to undertake self-assessments are more likely to be rigorous and accurate when undertaking self-assessments.

2. *Explicitly teach students how to self-assess and provide ongoing support*
   Many students do not innately know how to self-assess. Teachers need to directly teach students how to self-assess and provide opportunities for students to practise self-assessment and receive feedback and assistance. Students, particularly lower-achieving students, tend to need support to reflect on their learning and often benefit from guidelines or instructions that they can follow. Providing students with feedback on their progress enhances the impact of self-assessment. Also, providing opportunities for students to engage in group discussions and evaluation supports the accuracy and impact of self-assessment.

3. *Allow students to contribute to creating standards or criteria*
   When students contribute to the creation of standards or criteria they tend to be more engaged and more invested in the self-assessment process. They also will spend more time, and are more rigorous, in undertaking their own self-assessment.

4. *Create a positive, trusting classroom culture*
   Students are more likely to accurately self-assess when they feel their classroom is a safe space and that they will not be judged. Consider keeping self-assessments private.

5. *Use self-assessment as a formative not a summative assessment tool*
   Self-assessment is most successful when it is used as a formative assessment tool and students know it won't count towards their grades. Students are more likely to accurately self-assess, and it also provides opportunities for students to adapt and revise their approach to learning.

6. *Consider using a rubric*
   Research has found greater learning results from self-assessment when more complex judgments are used. Rubrics are one way of achieving this. However, students tend to require explicit instruction around how to effectively interpret and use rubrics. Combining criteria and performance standards with specific examples of the final product, or worked examples, can also support the impact of rubrics.

7. *Follow up self-assessments with student-teacher learning conversations*
   Providing opportunities for students to discuss their self-assessments with a teacher enhances the impact of self-assessment. Discussing any differences between the student's self-assessment and their teacher's assessment can be a powerful pedagogical approach to enhancing a student's learning.

Read more about how self-assessment can significantly enhance learning when used in Assessment for Learning.