Pragmatic Practices in Assessments, Group Activities, and Homework that Inspire Student Accountability

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ABSTRACT

English language learners study in challenging settings, susceptible to feeling overwhelmed by academic expectations. Building the foundation of accountability assists learners to take ownership of their language study, resulting in deeper language education. This poster exhibits assessments, group activities, and homework practices that elicit pragmatic practices to inspire student accountability.
English language learners of all levels and ages are called to acquire and learn a foreign language, and in many situations, they must do so in academically challenging settings that differ from their known understandings of classroom expectations. Incorporating and practicing clear academic exercises that encourage accountability are essential to build upon past, present, and future student learning. In connection, personal accountability elicits feelings of empowerment and confidence. These encouraged students take pride in their courses and aim to set higher goals, accomplishing deeper English language education.

This poster display identifies pragmatic ways teachers can encourage and support student accountability with a contemporary look into assessments, group activities, and homework; new insight on these categories have proven in our classrooms to inspire student accountability. Assessments not only calculate grades, but also keep a personal record of growth to be appreciated by the student; removing the point system introduces a new tool. Group activities that incorporate personalized responsibilities ascribe higher value. Homework that removes the busywork element and is revisited in a classroom activity becomes relevant.

Encouraging students to take ownership of their English language learning supports student accountability and is essential to strengthen past lessons and motivate future learning.
ASSESSMENTS

(1) Bring clarity to directions:
  ✔ Introduce target language; prepare students for direction language
  ✔ Include visual examples of question plus answer on quizzes/tests so that students fully understand expectation
  ✔ Use the same language on future assessments to be consistent
(2) Produce, don’t select:

- Create questions that require students to produce an answer (not guess/select)
- Use results to better identify skill strengths/weaknesses
- Bust the myth: longer responses don’t mean more grading time
ASSESSMENTS

(3) Freedom of choice

✓ Provide students with a choice in free response questions
✓ More choice means more opportunity to see student successes and understand student weaknesses
GROUP ACTIVITIES

(1) Think-Pair-Share handouts

✓ Students first think (write/check questions), then talk with a partner, and record an answer

✓ Students produce, practice speaking, practice listening, and practice writing in one activity

✓ Activity has many facets and uses
GROUP ACTIVITIES

(2) Task oriented work

- Orient students first with individual tasks and then group tasks
- Identify specific tasks with expectations
- Allow students to work individually on their task and later come together as a group
(3) Group presentations

- Clarify individual and group expectations
- Be clear on grading rubric; individual grade or group grade?
- Allow students an opportunity to reflect via self and group assessments
(1) Build connections

- Connect homework to real life and current events
- Allow opportunities for students to share their culture and perspectives
- Repeat, repeat, repeat target language and relationships; use repeated examples
HOMEWORK

(2) Revisit purpose

- Remove stigma of homework as busy work; lower grade weight and refocus attention to in-class work

- Use homework as opportunity to briefly prepare or review lessons; write an essay draft in class and assign final draft for home or read a text at home and in class
(3) Utilize questions

- Write questions, not statements
- Questions promote critical thinking
- Open-ended questions build the expectation of true, realistic themes
- This homework can be then used to facilitate discussions in class
Clear goals, directions, and expectations encourage student accountability, and offering choice when appropriate makes achieving goals a personal success.