

Assignment 3 Assessment Instrument: Core Competency Group

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Rationale

Core Competencies are a required part of the new BC curriculum that span all grades and subjects. By engaging in the Core Competencies while learning, the intention is for students to have a deeper understanding of the content they are learning. “Along with literacy and numeracy foundations, they are central to British Columbia’s K-12 curriculum and assessment system and directly support students in their growth as educated citizens.” (Ministry of Education, Core Competency Introduction). Core Competencies are relevant across all subjects as they are the overarching skills that are practiced in different ways depending on content and context. Along with curricular competencies in each subject, the Core Competencies are the “doing” part of the curriculum and represent the skills that humans continue to develop and learn throughout their lifetime.

The three main Core Competencies are **Communication**, **Thinking**, and **Personal and Social**. Each Core Competency has several interrelated sub-competencies that relate to the main Core Competency. **Communication** contains *Communication* and *Collaboration*. **Thinking** contains *Creative Thinking* and *Critical & Reflective Thinking*. **Personal and Social** contains *Personal Awareness & Responsibility*, *Social Awareness & Responsibility*, and *Positive Personal & Cultural Identity*. The sub-competencies often overlap each other and each represents skills that students can embed within all areas of the curriculum. Each sub-competency has facets, which describe the skills of each sub-competency. These facets can relate across Core Competencies and sub-competencies, and students tend to be working on multiple facets during any given experience. Each Core Competency also has 6 Profiles, which describe student progression of growth in the sub-competencies. Students will become more advanced in their abilities to exemplify Core Competencies and understand them in more complex and deeper ways. The profiles are meant to be descriptions of life-long learning and are therefore not associated with any grade or age. These profiles are also where the student friendly ‘I can’ statements come from.

Below is one full example of the above description of the various aspects of the Core Competencies.

The Core Competency of **Communicating** has two sub-competencies: *Communicating* and *Collaborating*. The sub-competency of *Communicating* has three facets; ‘connecting and engaging with others’, ‘focusing on intent and purpose’, and ‘acquiring and presenting information.’ An example of a facet description from the ‘focus on intent and purpose’ is “they recognize the role the audience plays in constructing meaning, and they make strategic choices to help convey their messages and create their intended impact”. A statement from Profile Three for Communicating that relates to this facets could be “I can consider my purpose when I am choosing a form and content.”

A key component of the Core Competencies in relation to assessment is that they are meant to be self assessed by the student. The teacher's role is to provide students with meaningful tasks and activities that incorporate the Core Competencies and give students ongoing opportunities to reflect on the Core Competencies in relation to where and how they are using them and their own growth in all the sub-competencies. Self assessment of the Core Competencies engages the student in noticing and naming their own learning experience in the intellectual and social realms. This allows students to gain a richer understanding of the process of learning, the diversity of learning styles and modalities, and to grow in their sense of responsibility for their personal growth and development.

Links to Research

Since the Core Competencies are relatively new with the introduction of BC's new curriculum, there has not been a lot of research done on the implementation of them with students. However, there are a few resources that can give context to their implementation and more in depth information about their rationale. There are also lots of resources created by teachers and districts on implementation of the Core Competencies in classrooms.

An important note about resources for Core Competencies that were created prior to September of 2019: The Ministry of Education finalized the Core Competencies in the summer of 2019, which included adding a sub-competency (*Collaborating*) and changing aspects of the **Personal and Social** Core Competency. Note that resources made prior these changes will need to be updated to reflect the current iteration of the Core Competencies.

- <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/> The Ministry of Education's 'BC's New Curriculum' website contains all the relevant information about the Core Competencies, including the sub-competencies, facets, and profiles. Each sub-competency also has a section called 'Illustrations' that contains a large amount of examples from teachers of specific ways they have implemented the sub-category in their classrooms.
- There are several school districts in BC and the Yukon who are doing district wide work of implementing the Core Competencies and providing schools and teachers with lots of resources to work with.
 - Surrey District 36: <https://corecompetencies36.com/>
 - Sooke District 62: <http://learningcommons62.sd62.bc.ca/>
 - Burnaby District 41: <https://blogs.sd41.bc.ca/literacy/templates/>
 - Cowichan District 79: <https://sd79.bc.ca/services/curriculum/curriculum-resources-k-12/core-competencies/>
 - Victoria District 61: <https://learn.sd61.bc.ca/curriculum/core-competencies/>
 - Yukon Schools: <http://jjewell.yukonschools.ca/core-competencies.html>
 - Yukon Schools: <http://lss.yukonschools.ca/secondary.html>
- <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum-info> - There is a series of documents provided by the Ministry of Education (at the bottom of the linked page) that show the history of the redesign of BC's new curriculum, including a document called 'Defining Cross-Curricular

Competencies' that outlines the rationales for and the process of defining the Core Competencies.

- Various individual blogs or websites from teachers who are doing lots of work on incorporating the Core Competencies into their classrooms. These are great resources for both ideas and templates to use. Here are a few of our favorites.
 - <https://kellivogstad.com/2017/04/22/core-competencies-its-not-about-the-checklist/>
 - <https://startingwiththebeginning.wordpress.com/2017/12/07/self-assessment-of-core-competencies/>
 - <https://sd79.bc.ca/documents/2017/05/core-competencies-and-student-self-assessment-with-linda-oreilly.pdf/>
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HdmVYBuXxAjGt8N9WnwJ7liRzWIJKP6jVAsTIWZXjvE/mobilebasic> An excellent bibliography of picture books that can be used to explore the Core Competencies.
- <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1D-4VcyK9X7P-Mhr0ggQuwOTbgjjragFG> Prompting questions for each Core Competency
- http://smaurice.yukonschools.ca/uploads/4/8/3/3/48336245/primary_core_competencies_aug.17.pdf Sofie Maurice has written an excellent resource for the primary years, "Embedding Core Competencies in the Classroom"
- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FV-eW0mNhK21izjoP67blyuFivOfn4S3/view> Indigenous worldviews and perspectives in the classroom - specifically connectedness and relationship is very similar to Core Competencies
- <https://dormickpark.abbyschools.ca/parents-students/new-curriculum> Videos explaining Core Competencies and some ways they are being learned in classrooms

The Pros of Core Competencies

- The history of the creation of the Core Competencies for BC seems very based in research about learners, learning, and learning environments.
- Core Competencies are applicable across all curricular content.
- Core Competencies make a more holistic learning environment where learning can become more personalized.
- Core Competencies put more focus on the "doing" of learning rather than the "what" (the content), which allows for a much greater flexibility in how teachers and students "get to" the required learning outcomes.
- Student self-assessment allows for self-reflection and teaching opportunities for students to look inwards on how they are doing and feeling.
- Student self-assessment helps make the learning process visible to students, teachers, and parents.
- Self reflection on Core Competencies teaches language that promotes a holistic view of people.
- The Core Competency skills extends beyond the classroom and are skills that can be used in everyday life that build a foundation for lifelong learning.

The Cons of Core Competencies

- Core Competencies may not be applicable for special education learners, especially for those who have a hard time self-reflecting. How do you incorporate these learners and include them in activities related to the Core Competencies?
- If a teacher is not invested in the Core Competencies, self-assessment could become an activity with no value to students. Students may not learn value of competencies.
- Core Competencies can be wordy and jargon filled. It is important to use kid friendly language, especially with younger students.
- Both teachers and students need to have ongoing training and engagement in the Core Competencies and learn how to incorporate them into the classroom.
- Core Competencies require teachers to also be self-reflecting on their own teaching practice. How do school administration and the ministry enforce this engagement?
- Inconsistency between cultural norms and Core Competencies may make them difficult to address and incorporate into the classroom.
- If not presented in context of growth mindset Core Competencies may be used as a tool for students to compare themselves to each other and result in feelings of inadequacy.

Potential Bias in Core Competencies

There is, of course, the potential for bias in the Core Competencies, particularly in the ways in which individual teachers utilize them in their classrooms. Below is a chart of potential sources for bias, with examples, and some considerations of practice to help teachers reduce bias.

Potential Source of Bias	Potential Considerations to reduce bias
<u>Cultural bias in Core Competencies</u> Eg: wording in Core Competencies may privilege communication norms typically found in Euro-western society.	Making sure teachers have a culturally responsive practice when engaging students about the Core Competencies.
<u>Cultural bias in implementation</u> Eg: demonstrating collaboration may look different across different cultures.	Making sure teachers have a culturally responsive practice when engaging students about the Core Competencies.
<u>Teacher personal bias</u> Eg: a teacher includes only their own perspective of a specific subject (ie: politics) in discussing and providing self-assessment materials for the Core Competencies.	Keep presentation and self-assessments free of teacher bias. Make sure to include a diversity of perspectives and that examples are something students can relate to. Ensure that you place value on all areas of the Core Competencies.

<p><u>Teachers rigid in how students self-assess</u> Eg: a teacher may want students to assess by “thinking on their own”, whereas a student may value collaborative feedback from peers as more important in terms of self assessment</p>	<p>Ensure that students have a role in the co-creation of what self-assessment of the Core Competencies looks like.</p>
<p><u>Cultural Appropriation</u> Eg: using Indigenous materials for Core Competencies that are not local to where you are teaching.</p>	<p>When using Indigenous materials ensure that it is relevant to, or best practice created by, the local Indigenous community(ies) where you are teaching.</p>

Samples

We will be bringing the following to our presentation in class;

- A list of the resources listed above for our peers. This will also be provided over email.
- An updated sheet of “Connecting The Core Competencies with First Peoples Principles of Learning” that we will be using for an activity with the class centered around reading the book *The Six Cedar Trees*.
- A sample self assessment for the primary grades based around Beaver from the book *The Six Cedar Trees*.
- A model of a Core Competency class bulletin board.
- A sample of a Core Competency self-assessment journal for the school year.
- Samples from the Ministry of Education website on “identity recipe.”
- Potentially other samples we get inspired to create to share with our peers!

Closing Comments

Core Competencies are an integral and central part of BC’s K-12 curriculum. In terms of their relation to assessment the focus is placed on the student self-assessing their own growth over time, rather than the teacher providing assessment feedback to students and families. Through this project we have learned how vital Core Competencies are in aiding students in creating understanding and language about their own personal learning. We believe their use for students to self-assess their learning provides a richness and depth to the learning process that will support student’s and their communities their whole lives. We have also learned the importance of students having a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and language of the Core Competencies and how they are relevant in and out of the classroom. We believe that ongoing daily engagement with the Core Competencies is key for this understanding to ensure that students are able to relate them to their own learning.

There are an infinite number of ways that we can provide self-assessment tools and opportunities for students to engage with the Core Competencies. However, we think there are some key factors that should be considered when selecting these tools and planning these opportunities. Core Competencies are meant to be interrelated and self-assessments should therefore emphasize the connected nature of the Core Competencies, sub-categories, facets and profiles. Self-reflection should also occur on an on-going basis, not simply at the end of a project, term, or year. Reflection should include both assessing backwards on learning that has happened, but also forward on goals for next steps of Core Competency growth.

Through this project we have learned some strategies for embedding the Core Competencies into the everyday happenings in the classroom. This investigation has shown us that Core Competencies are not a stand alone concept and that they can be used from the very first day of school until the last day of school. It is important as teachers to show that we value the Core Competencies and highlight the use of them in the classroom. Furthermore, we left with a clearer understanding of how to use Core Competencies in our classrooms in a way that incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and understanding in an authentic way.

Core Competencies are an integral part of building and maintaining the classroom community. They are something you can work with at the beginning of the year while building community by helping students to see the competencies in themselves and others before the “curricular content” begins. For example, we can find ways to connect them with our class values or build them into our class contract. We can also use Core Competency language in all our activities and help the students to notice them in our everyday lives. We think it is important to maintain a consistent practice of using the language of Core Competencies throughout the year. This repetition and continued incorporation is necessary due to the wide scope of the Core Competencies and the valuable holistic learning they provide. There are so many ways to incorporate the Core Competencies into classrooms that can be interesting and meaningful for students while also provide valuable feedback to teachers about student learning.

Other Sources:

Landahl, M., & Aleck, C. (2018). *The Six Cedar Trees*. Strong Nations Publishing.

BC's New Curriculum. <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/> Accessed October 27, 2019.