Perspectives on "Assessment Reimagined" from Project Zero's First 50 Years

PZ50

PROJECT ZERO

FIFTY YEARS

HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

At the beginning, PZ's research focused on investigating cognitive processing in the arts. This seminal work led researchers to expand to broader aspects of human potential including learning, critical thinking, creativity, and intelligence. In the recent decades, PZ research built on these rich traditions by exploring further fundamental questions of human potential as they relate to contemporary issues facing an array of educational settings—schools, families, museums, and businesses. To celebrate 50 years, PZers looked across the vast body of research and developed an organizing framework that includes nine research areas representative of many fac ets of the five decades of work. These nine areas include: The Arts, Assessment, Character and Ethics, Civic Agency, Creativity, Developing Understanding, Global Competencies, Intelligences, and Thinking. PZ created a brief overview of each of the 9 areas as stand-alone "booklets." Each of the four-page booklets describes PZ's research in the area along with a set of "PZ perspectives," notes some big questions that are launching PZ into the future, lists key PZ projects, highlights important PZ quotes, offers a sample of notable PZ publications, vand visualizes the main frameworks and ideas.

The artwork and graphic elements featured on these pages was created by our collaborators, dpict, a local graphic facilitation and design firm, along with Matt Riecken, PZ's digital learning specialist.

ASSESSMENT REIMAGINED

Assessment, evaluation, and documentation are essential to any teaching and learning process, and the way learning is documented and assessed directly influences what gets taught. Our re-imagination of assessment involves a number of "shifts" from traditional notions: assessment of process as well as product (when, what); teachers and students as protagonists in the assessment process (who); assessment driven by the most important goals we hold for students, whether numbers capture them or not (why); and assessment as a collective and relationship-building process (how, where).

BIG QUESTIONS

What does learning look like?

How can we reimagine assessment as a pivotal moment of learning?

What are the characteristics of authentic or "effective" assessment?

How do we know if, what, and how students understand?

PZ PERSPECTIVES

Assessment is an episode of learning.

We spend too much time judging children and not enough time trying to help them.

Human beings differ from one another and there is absolutely no reason to teach and assess all individuals in the identical way.

Students and teachers should be active protagonists in (not passive recipients of) the assessment process.
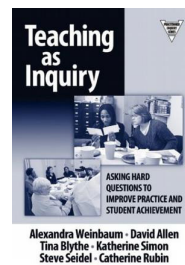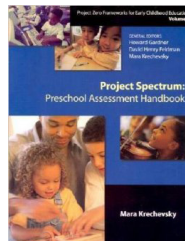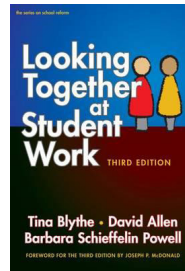
KEY PROJECTS

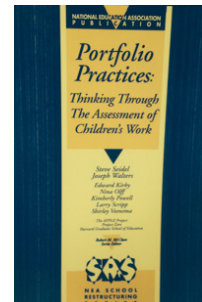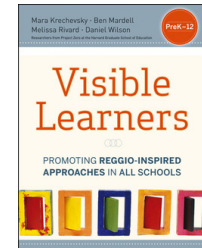Project Spectrum (1984 – 1993)

Arts PROPEL (1986 – 1992)

Making Learning Visible (1997 – 2012)

The Evidence Project (1998 – 2002)

"Documentation can provide evidence of learning not captured by most standardized tests, like students listening to and learning from each other, using their imaginations, thinking critically and creatively, developing a sense of esthetics and emotional understanding, and understanding what it means to be members of a democratic society." - Mara Krechevsky

"Failing to finish a timed, multi-item achievement test in biology is a lesson in the American romance with speed, efficiency, and technology as much as in the structure of a scientific domain." - Dennie Wolf

"If the goal of education is simply to raise scores on the current crop of standardized tests, then teachers should spend their time training children on the tests, and we would have no need for research. But as researchers, we want to explore what is possible—in terms of the extraordinary capacities of children, the potentials of serious teachers, and the needs for an educated and engaged citizenry." - Howard Gardner

ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT is an EPISODE of LEARNING

WE SPEND TOO MUCH TIME JUDGING CHILDREN and NOT ENOUGH TIME TRYING to HELP THEM.

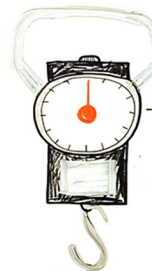STUDENTS & TEACHERS SHOULD BE **ACTIVE PROTAGONISTS** in the ASSESSMENT PROCESS

WHAT DOES LEARNING **LOOK** LIKE?

HOW DO WE KNOW **IF/WHAT/HOW** STUDENTS HAVE UNDERSTOOD

HOW CAN WE **REIMAGINE ASSESSMENT** as a PIVOTAL MOMENT of LEARNING?

WHAT ARE the **CHARACTERISTICS** of AUTHENTIC/ EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT?

"**HUMAN BEINGS DIFFER** from ONE ANOTHER and there is ABSOLUTELY NO NEED to **TEACH & ASSESS** ALL INDIVIDUALS in the IDENTICAL WAY."
— HOWARD GARDNER

TO SOLELY USE STANDARDIZED ACHIEVEMENT TESTS IS LIKE CASTING a NET into the SEA — a NET THAT IS INTENTIONALLY DESIGNED to LET the MOST INTERESTING FISH GET AWAY. THEN, to DESCRIBE the ONES THAT ARE CAUGHT STRICTLY in TERMS of THEIR WEIGHT and LENGTH IS to RADICALLY REDUCE WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THEM. TO FURTHER CONCLUDE THAT ALL the CONTENTS of the SEA CONSIST of FISH LIKE THOSE in the NET COMPOUNDS the ERROR FURTHER. **WE NEED MORE KINDS of FISH.** WE NEED to KNOW MORE about THOSE WE CATCH. **WE NEED NEW NETS.**
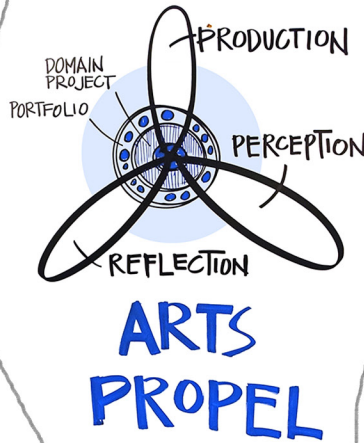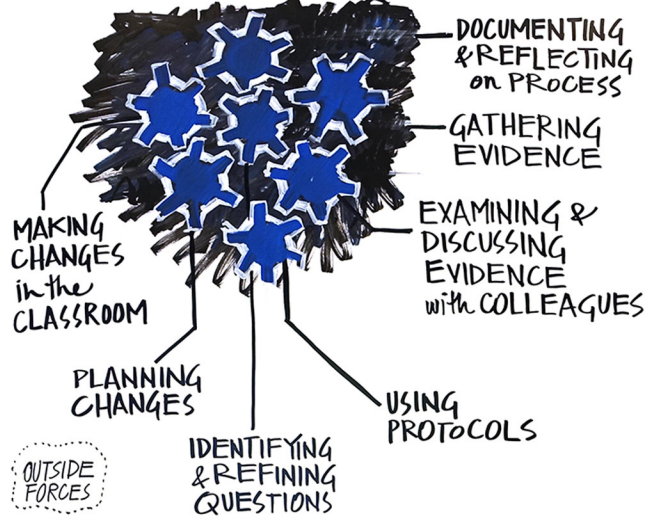
— William T. Randolph
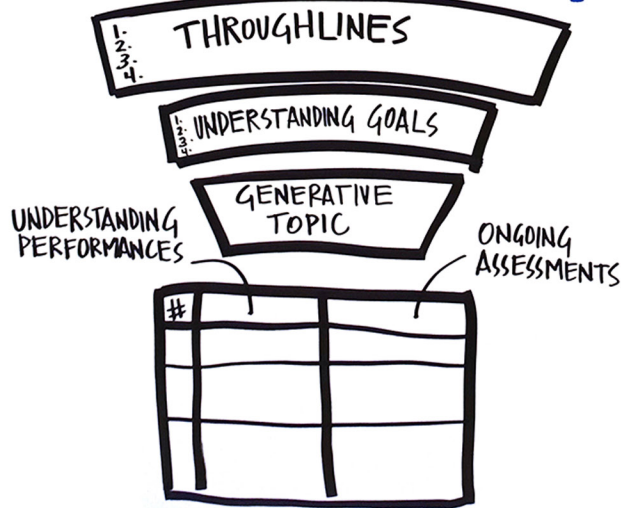Commissioner of Ed State of Colorado

NOTABLE PZ PROJECTS

PROJECT SPECTRUM
ARTS PROPEL
THE EVIDENCE PROJECT
TEACHING FOR UNDERSTANDING
MAKING LEARNING VISIBLE
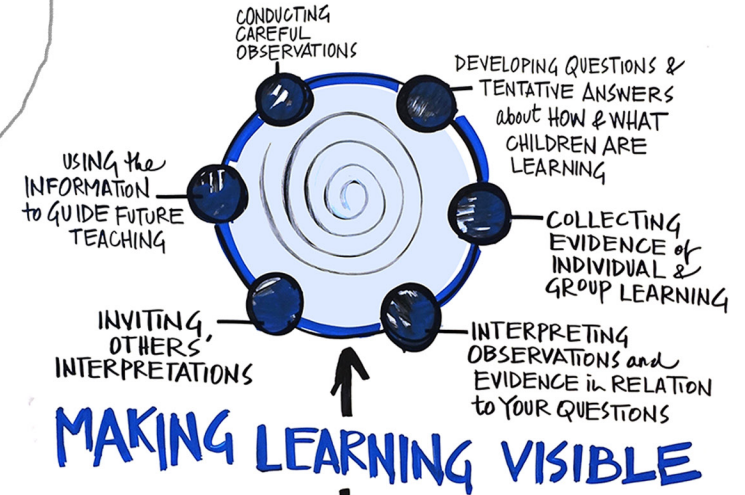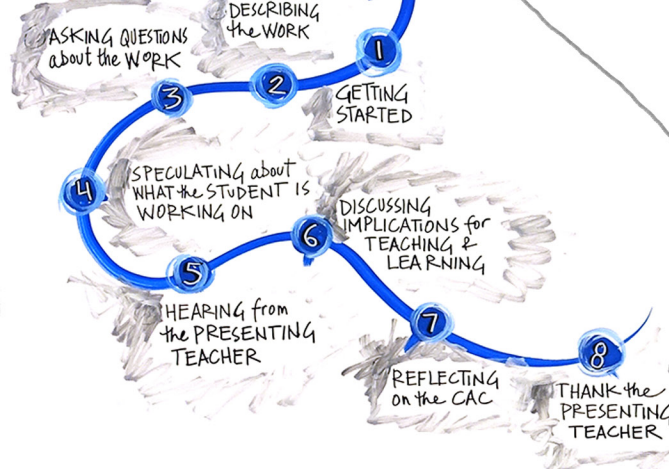MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOLS NETWORK

KEY FRAMEWORKS

the EVIDENCE PROCESS

OUTSIDE RESOURCES

- DOCUMENTING & REFLECTING on PROCESS
- GATHERING EVIDENCE
- EXAMINING & DISCUSSING EVIDENCE with COLLEAGUES
- MAKING CHANGES in the CLASSROOM
- PLANNING CHANGES
- IDENTIFYING & REFINING QUESTIONS
- USING PROTOCOLS

OUTSIDE FORCES

ARTS PROPEL

- PRODUCTION
- PERCEPTION
- REFLECTION
- DOMAIN PROJECT
- PORTFOLIO

TEACHING for UNDERSTANDING

- THROUGHLINES
- UNDERSTANDING GOALS
- GENERATIVE TOPIC
- UNDERSTANDING PERFORMANCES
- ONGOING ASSESSMENTS

The COLLABORATIVE ASSESSMENT of STUDENT WORK

1. DESCRIBING the WORK
2. ASKING QUESTIONS about the WORK
3. (part of cycle)
4. SPECULATING about WHAT the STUDENT is WORKING ON
5. HEARING from the PRESENTING TEACHER
6. DISCUSSING IMPLICATIONS for TEACHING & LEARNING
7. REFLECTING on the CAC
8. THANK the PRESENTING TEACHER

GETTING STARTED

MAKING LEARNING VISIBLE

- CONDUCTING CAREFUL OBSERVATIONS
- DEVELOPING QUESTIONS & TENTATIVE ANSWERS about HOW & WHAT CHILDREN ARE LEARNING
- COLLECTING EVIDENCE of INDIVIDUAL & GROUP LEARNING
- INTERPRETING OBSERVATIONS and EVIDENCE in RELATION to your QUESTIONS
- INVITING OTHERS' INTERPRETATIONS
- USING the INFORMATION to GUIDE FUTURE TEACHING

5 FEATURES of DOCUMENTATION

1. INVOLVES a SPECIFIC QUESTION THAT GUIDES the PROCESS
2. INVOLVES COLLECTIVELY ANALYZING, INTERPRETING, and EVALUATING INDIVIDUAL and GROUP OBSERVATIONS
3. MAKES USE of MULTIPLE LANGUAGES
4. MAKES LEARNING VISIBLE; IT IS NOT PRIVATE.
5. NOT ONLY RETROSPECTIVE, IT IS ALSO PROSPECTIVE