

Increasing the power of DART as an Assessment FOR Learning

FALL DART Assessment Results

November, 2009

A Langley School

| Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
|---|---|
| <p>+’s Could use a web Can organize info Make some connections</p> <p>Foci Text Features Can’t read ‘em – need to know how to use and extract info Strategies - need ‘em</p> | <p>+’s Check for understanding but may not use strategies Can use note-making frame</p> <p>Foci Note-making – in own words Strategies needed Main Ideas / Details Text features</p> |
| Grade 6 | Grade 7 |
| <p>+’s One or two strategies Don't misread - get gist Some main ideas Simple inferences Make simple connections</p> <p>Foci Need more strategies Lack details and thoroughness – note-making Support inferences Need to connect more widely</p> | <p>+’s One or two strategies Don't misread – get gist Some main ideas Simple inferences Make simple connections</p> <p>Foci Need more strategies Lack details and thoroughness – note-making Support inferences Need to connect more widely</p> |

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The accompanying chart provides a focus for our instruction. We may conduct additional assessment to continually adjust our instruction over the course of the year. In the spring, we can do a number of things:

- 1) We can conduct the Spring DART in the conventional manner, and ask the same two questions we ask in the fall: What are the students' strengths; what areas do we need to focus our instruction on? However, paying close attention to the "score" detracts from the noticing of "strengths" and areas for focus.
- 2) We can conduct the Spring DART, ignore scoring, highlight as in the fall, and "bin" them afterwards to obtain a score.

However, we may lack some confidence in the accuracy of our scores.

But, we may have a better view of the students' strengths and weaknesses, and be able to compare Fall + 'ves and -'ves for the group.

Also, if we want to do the work, we can look at individual students too. We would sensibly confine this to only those scoring 1's and 2's.

And, we may have a better direct comparison of student progress, from the qualitative data, than from the scores. In other words, students may be making progress, but not showing they are doing so from their scores. I'm thinking here for example of moving students from a level 2 to 3.

Next year we can:

- 3) Conduct the Fall and Spring DART assessment and compare last year's grade 4 cohort to the same cohort now in grade 5, and so on as they move through the school.

However, which is better: to track scores (quantitative) from year 1 to year 2 (two sets of data only), or to compare the qualitative data over the two and have 4 sets of data (qualitative) to look at?

Comparing qualitative data, we can see patterns emerging both in terms of our impact through focused teaching, and we can see if we are impacting their scores over time.

If we continue to track our cohorts in this manner, not only can we report out our students' progress, but we also have on-going guidance and feedback about our own instruction.

Questions:

Is this worthwhile to increase the emphasis of DART as an assessment FOR learning?

Is this manageable? What kind of processes and structures do we need to put into place to support schools and teachers to do this, or something similar?