Self-Direction Rubric Introduction

Self-direction is a competency that includes both the intrapersonal skills of self-awareness and reflection and the interpersonal skills of collaborating with others to elicit feedback and support during the learning process. While exercising self-direction, students collaborate with and seek input from others, identify their interests and curiosity about topics under study, and apply their ideas to shape the learning process. This includes learning how to define learning goals and craft inquiries / driving questions, reflecting on their process, reassessing and adjusting their approach when needed, drawing on previous experiences to guide their decisions, and demonstrating care about the quality of their work and about meeting the deadlines they set. Teaching and learning focused on self-direction facilitates the process for students to take more ownership of their learning.

The self-direction tools provided in the toolkit support student pathways to becoming self-directed and self-determined learners. Each rubric is aligned with the Essential Skills and Dispositions Framework. Unlike discipline-specific learning progressions and rubrics, the Framework's developmental progressions reflect components essential to the skill itself and describe growth dependent on years of active exploration, experimentation, setbacks, and ongoing reflection. The rubric is intended to be used as an instructional tool to guide learning, as well as an assessment tool to provide feedback-related success criteria and next steps for learning (rather than simply generating a score).

The self-direction rubrics offer a developmental progression describing age-appropriate behaviors that become more complex along the journey from beginner to expert at each grade band (grades K-2, grades 3-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12). According to the Framework, a beginner is anyone learning a skill, whether an adult, teenager, or young child. Regardless of age, beginners can be active explorers, capable of observing, mimicking, and learning from others, if given the right support within a learning environment. In other words, a student in second grade could exhibit behaviors described at the Extending (expert) level for the K-2 grade band; while a ninth-grade student might start the school year at the Emerging (beginner) level at the grades 9-12 band.

Each of the interrelated components of self-direction plays an essential role. Together these components create the full expression of self-direction. Likewise, learners may be more advanced with some components than others. Though components could be viewed as standalone skills, each provides a unique contribution tailored specifically to the essential skill of self-direction. These components include **Initiative and Ownership, Goal Setting and Planning**, and **Engaging and Managing. Self-Awareness** and **Monitoring and Adapting** are the metacognitive skills that are consistent across all of the essential skills and dispositions in the Framework (collaboration, communication, creativity, and self-direction). The following are the descriptors of the self-direction components, each with a focus question for students:

Dimensions of Self-Direction

Self-Awareness

Reflecting on past experiences to evaluate one's own strengths, limitations, motivations, interests, and aspirations within different learning contexts.

"What am I learning about myself, as a learner?

Initiative and Ownership

Taking responsibility for learning, finding purposeful driving questions, shaping opportunities to fit personal interests and approach to learning and, and seeking input from others.

"How can I integrate my personal interests into how I approach new learning?"

Goal Setting and Planning

Developing long-term goals, establishing meaningful learning targets, identifying effective strategies, and planning out steps.

"How can I break down a complex task and develop concrete steps to accomplish it?"

Engaging and Managing

Seeking out relevant resources and information to support learning goals and refining strategies; maintaining effective pace, reaching short-term benchmarks and long-term goals.

"What am I learning about locating resources, managing my time, and seeking help when I need it?"

Monitoring and Adapting

Evaluating progress, adapting strategies, seizing failure in order to grow from mistakes, and attributing success to effort, persistence, access, opportunity, help, and time.

"Am I able to see when something isn't working well, adjust my approach, and learn from missteps?"

The four performance level descriptors in the rubric are drawn from the research base in the Essential Skills and Dispositions Framework describing a developmental progression of self-directions skills and abilities.

Emerging

The student is new to the task and context, follows directions or modeled behaviors, responds to guidance, and learns to use skills in a controlled context.

Developing

The student is familiar with a specific task and context, follows rules, purposefully explores through trial and error, looks to others for support, uses known steps to complete a task, and discovers patterns.

Applying

The student completes different forms of tasks in related contexts, analyzes situations to plan approach, refines approach by testing ideas, selectively draws on expertise of others, and identifies familiar aspects of tasks to determine relevant strategies.

Extending

The student experiences wide variations of tasks in different contexts, analyzes unfamiliar situations/contexts, seeks connections to others to broaden skills, looks for connections in other areas and tailors application of skills, and notices what is missing.

Prior to using this rubric with a performance task, it is recommended that the teacher reviews the rubric with students, allowing them the opportunity to ask clarifying questions. You may want to conduct a text rendering protocol with the students, or use this think aloud protocol developed by Dr. Karin Hess as a guide.

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Dimensions of Self-Direction

Self-Awareness

Initiative & Ownership

Goal Setting & Planning

Engaging & Managing

Monitoring & Adapting

Emerging

Developing

Applying

Extending