

Book Review: Developing Assessment-Capable Visible Learners, K-12

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Selecting a text to read about teaching and learning, for an educator, is one of the hardest decisions. Time may be short (of course it is!) as well as funds, so finding a professional resource that provides “bang for your buck”, is vital. Developing Assessment-Capable Visible Learners, K-12, by Nancy Frey, John Hattie, and Douglas Fisher, totally fits the bill!

Wait, before you stop reading because you saw the words “assessment-capable visible learners” and read “teach to the test,” let me reassure you that this text in no way asks you to teach to any test. Rather, this book describes the characteristics of students who are visible learners and the actions teachers can take and decisions they can make to help all of their students really learn at the transfer level. Which is, after all, our goal as educators.

In this text, the authors introduce six principles they feel assessment-capable students, and teachers, possess. These principles state that assessment-capable visible learners possess the following abilities:

- Know their current level of understanding (Chapter 2)
- Understand where they’re going and have the confidence to take on the challenge (Chapter 3)
- Select tools to guide their learning (Chapter 4)
- Seek feedback and recognize that errors are opportunities to learn (Chapter 5)
- Monitor progress and adjust their learning (Chapter 6)
- Recognize their learning and teach others (Chapter 7)

The book subsequently devotes a chapter to each principle with a detailed vignette and a thorough description of each component.

An extremely helpful tool throughout the book is QR codes that lead to videos connected to that particular principle. The videos are interviews with teachers sharing their understanding and use of that principle. The videos are short, usually around three-four minutes, and illustrate how “real” teachers utilize them in their practice.

A second tool that I feel can really support the use of the ideas explained in this text is the Questions for Reflection spots. Each chapter has between two to four of these stopping points sprinkled throughout each chapter, where an educator, or a PLC, can pause their discussion, engage in personal reflection, before sharing thoughts, asking questions, and when appropriate, creating a common understanding.

A third tool incorporated in this text are templates that educators can download to use in assisting their students in becoming assessment-capable visible learners. For example, in chapter 5, about feedback, there is a template named Mystery Writing Rubric for Elementary

Grades. This particular form allows students to “score” another student’s draft prior to the writing conference between the author and teacher.

Time is a resource that is always a major factor for teachers as they make decisions about professional development. It is imperative for a teacher to find materials that are accessible **and** useable. *Developing Assessment-Capable Visible Learners, K-12*, is that type of text. The principles outlined throughout the text are applicable to teachers of all disciplines. The authors embedded tools--videos, downloadable templates, and reflection opportunities--that scaffold and extend the reading to meet the needs of all readers. I highly recommend this text as a must read!