

A•S•K: Assessing the application of skills and knowledge as learners read and respond to text

During the **A•S•K** assessment learners apply skills* and knowledge to grade-level text (fiction or non-fiction), and through the process they show where they are in relation to learning outcomes or learning intentions, outlined in the curriculum. Through the **A•S•K protocol** achievement information is gathered using the *SmartLearning* process and shows to what degree learners are:

- **Goal setting and reflecting in relation to criteria set for complex tasks, and in relation to brain activity**, at important points during the process
- **Activating prior knowledge and making connections** throughout the process
- **Questioning** before, during and after reading
- **Predicting** before and during reading
- **Processing information** (gr.1 & 2) -- reading and thinking with text (two chunks), in a range of ways: gathering ideas and important details to show what's happening, showing connections, generating questions, and predicting before and during the reading

Processing information (gr.3-12) -- reading and thinking with text (three chunks), in a range of ways: gathering images and details; generating and justifying what's important; summarizing & synthesizing; making connections to other texts, to their own lives and to things happening in the world; generating questions to show what they want the reading to answer, predicting and justifying their predictions, reflecting on their thinking, reading, viewing and writing

- **Transforming understanding:** (gr.1 & 2) writing in role to **interpreting text**
Transforming understanding: (gr.3-12) **summarizing, synthesizing and justifying, analyzing and interpreting text**
- **Reflecting on the learning: finding evidence of meeting goals, monitoring and adjusting learning as the process unfolds, noticing strengths and setting new goals** for learning

The **A•S•K skill continuum** provides descriptors of four levels of achievement that reflect standards** set for learners of a similar age.

In *SmartLearning* we strive to align teaching and assessment. Our action researchers and teachers implementing SmartLearning engage learners in the formal **A•S•K** process to gather information for planning, teaching and reporting. Learners are active partners in this process and their goal-setting is based on what they learn about their strengths and challenges during the process.

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Formative assessment information, gathered on a regular basis through observation and daily work samples, informs planning, teaching and learning in *SmartLearning*. Learners are taught to set goals in relation to tasks and skills using co-constructed criteria, to monitor and self-regulate their learning as it is in progress, and to reflect on various aspects of their learning. They notice strengths emerging in their work and reflections lead to the setting of personalized goals.

The teacher uses assessment information to plan *SmartLearning* sequences tailored to the learners' needs. (S)he uses the *SmartLearning* framework and a kit of *BrainSmart* Thinking tools to develop skills with the whole class. Learners are then guided to independently apply their skills to *just-right-texts*, texts read with understanding at the speed of speech, during independent reading.

Once those two important aspects of *SmartLearning* are in place, learners are guided to apply the *SmartLearning* framework and tools to personal inquiries, through disciplined explorations.

An observer in a K-12 *SmartLearning* environment will see each learner supported as the teacher gradually releases responsibility. The learning is carefully scaffolded towards independent application of skills and knowledge to complex tasks.

A thread through the whole system of practice is the development of vocabulary and orthographic knowledge. In *SmartLearning*, we call this thread, *WordWork*. To develop orthographic knowledge or how words work, we use *Words Their Way*, a Pearson publication. We are continually amazed at the power of the approach. Brain-friendly routines are used to systematically and thoughtfully develop the continuum of word knowledge skills. Teachers also use a range of *BrainSmart* Thinking tools to deeply develop vocabulary across curricular areas.

The full implementation of *SmartLearning* over time has led to dramatic gains in achievement. See www.smartlearning.ca for details.



*The skills are outlined as learning outcomes in the BC Language Arts Curriculum (2006). Content outcomes from BC curriculum documents are used along with the *SmartLearning* framework and tools, to develop skills and knowledge across the curriculum.

** Performance scales used with the **A•S•K** assessment are adapted from the B.C. Performance Standards.