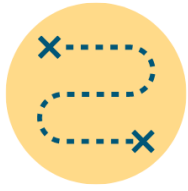


FREQUENT, VARIED ASSESSMENTS TOOL



Habitat Research Project: Varied Assessments to Demonstrate Mastery

By Jen Hines

TOOL DESCRIPTION

The tool is a research project unit that employs varied assessments.

CRITICAL CONTEXT INFORMATION

This unit was used with a second grade classroom at a suburban elementary school.

TOOL & LINKS

- [Habitat Research Project Introductory Slide Deck](#)
- [Habitat Research Project Rubric](#)
- [Student Work Examples](#)

About this Tool & Guidance for Adaptation

The goal of the Habitat Research Project (see links above) is to offer students a variety of assessment options to demonstrate their learning from the ecosystems and evolution science unit—and to show an understanding of the grade two life science standards. While the expectation is that all students show an understanding of the related standards, the Habitat Research Project provides students with the power to choose how they would like to be assessed. Student assessment options include (but are not limited to) creating a poster, constructing a diorama, writing a traditional report or book, making a video, designing a brochure, or composing a song, poem, or rap. By offering a variety of assessments to measure progress made towards mastering the same standards, teachers can honor the various learning styles within their classrooms.

This is a concept that could be adapted for a wide variety of curriculum areas and grade levels. It can be used frequently in a classroom to measure skills and standards across content areas.

By starting with the end goal—what is the standard or skill that is being measured or assessed—the assessment becomes more about what has been mastered and less about the modality in which mastery is shown.

The number and/or type of assessment choices can be limited depending on the grade and skill level.

Excerpted from *Innovation in Practice: A Student-Centered Learning Toolkit By Teachers, For Teachers*. ©The Teacher Collaborative 2022. [Theteachercollaborative.org](https://theteachercollaborative.org)



Teacher Narrative

The idea of offering a variety of assessment options is an important philosophy in my classroom, because I know that not all students develop and express their learning in the same way. While there are certain non-negotiable activities and assessments that are used schoolwide, factoring in student choice and offering varied assessments allows me to act on this educational belief.

Several years ago, I found myself wondering, if it is a widely accepted fact that not every student learns in the same way, why do we so often assess students' knowledge in just one way? How would I score if my knowledge was to be measured in a way that I am not proficient, such as through art or music? If the goal is to determine whether or not a student has mastered a standard, must we use one traditional assessment? Could we offer varied assessments for the same standard? Could we find ways to allow assessments and student choice to intersect? With these questions, the Habitat Research Project was created.

The Habitat Research Project allows students the opportunity to not only choose which habitat they would like to research but also choose the modality in which they would like to be assessed. This approach to varied assessments helps guide my instruction, as I am able to better understand my students as learners and more accurately determine knowledge of the skills and standards being assessed. This project also allows my students to demonstrate their mastery in a way in which they feel confident, giving them the opportunity to discover more about their own personal learning styles. The outcome is remarkable; although students created different products, all projects were unified in one important way: each project assessed the same learning outcomes.

In this specific example, grade two life science standards were being measured. Students were able to complete a variety of assessments to demonstrate their mastery of the same concepts. However, the concept behind the Habitat Research Project could be used across content areas. For example, students could show their understanding of the elements of a fiction text by writing a story, producing a play, or making a video, as opposed to assessing all students in one way, such as a "response to reading" question. By working backwards and starting with the end goal of what standard or skill is being assessed, teachers can offer their students varied assessment opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge. Additionally, by using this approach across content areas and to address multiple standards, teachers are frequently assessing their students' growth and abilities.

At the end of the Habitat Research Project, each student has researched a self-selected habitat and created a project to demonstrate all that they have learned. While each project should meet the same provided criteria, the ability to choose their own assessment modality empowers students and gives them more ownership not only over this project, but over their learning as well.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Jen Hines is a second grade teacher at Elmwood School in Hopkinton, MA. She believes in incorporating Student-Centered Learning into the classroom to encourage students to have authentic learning experiences, share in decision-making, and take ownership over their own learning. This includes opportunities for student choice, a variety of assessments to demonstrate mastery, and the connection between the curriculum and real world topics.

