REMOTE TEACHING: ASSESSMENT

MfA
For master teachers
of math and science

Project-Based Assessments

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A core part of Sharon's classroom was centered on project-based learning where students worked collaboratively to create a solution to a problem using mathematics and statistics. For instance, in her high school statistics class before the pandemic, students created a "fair" board game for local middle school students to play. But how do you make authentic project-based assessments work during a pandemic?

"My projects are all team projects. It's really important for me to have students talking with each other, bouncing ideas off each other, collaborating, and analyzing data together using statistics. It's a more authentic assessment."

▶ **How did Sharon modify project-based assessments for the remote classroom?**

Sharon adapted her project-based assessments to help students apply the content she was teaching to their lives in the time of COVID-19. She modified the deliverables, the data sources, the due dates, and the modes in which students presented their work. For example, students still designed a "fair" board game, but now it was for a family living in quarantine. Governor Cuomo's daily briefings on the coronavirus data became fair game for her statistics students to discuss and form ideas on sampling and selection bias. She also adapted the ways that students presented their projects: she used Zoom to host roundtable summatives and was even able to bring in former students to support and provide feedback to her current class. What she discovered was that the move to remote teaching didn't sever the connections students had with each other - it highlighted the need to keep them going.

An introductory slide for one of Sharon's statistics projects.

"I think it's really important to do authentic assessments, and I think they work way better in the virtual world... The real world and school worlds intersect and students can apply their STEM thinking to real issues facing their communities."

▶ **Start using project-based assessments by following these two pieces of advice:**

1. Make sure that your expectations are clear from the start, both around what you would like and when, and especially around the rubric that you use for grading. Provide students with the rubric in the beginning of the project and discuss with them. This gives you a lens for checking in with groups at regular intervals to make sure that they are progressing.

2. Use group roles to your advantage. Sharon found early on that she could increase accountability and responsibility within her group projects by having students each select a role, and even giving individual grades on top of the group grade for how well they executed their role in the project.

"I think projects teach students important soft skills - critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and public speaking - which are paramount in the society we live in today, and prepare students for success when they go on to college and enter the workforce."