



## Student-Friendly Language: Meet Them Where They're At



Mark Twain once said, “Don’t use a five-dollar word when a fifty-cent word will do.” It’s with that approachable spirit that Michelle Howe teaches her secondary students. She uses “student-friendly” versions of the Deep Learning Progressions to explicitly engage them in her Grade 12 geography class, and it’s made a real impact.

Student versions of the tools are available on the NPDL hub and are used throughout the global partnership with students as young as kindergarten. The accessible language allows students to develop a shared language and deeper understanding about the Global Competencies. These student-friendly progressions also allow them to self-assess and peer-assess. It all adds up to this: When students can deeply understand and apply concepts, their independence and confidence grow.

Howe focused on two Competencies: Critical Thinking and Creativity and used the student-friendly progressions throughout a monthlong learning experience. She started with a Google Form pre-assessment to determine students’ strengths and needs. This gave her useful information to guide her instruction. Then at midpoint, students completed a self-assessment. That informed her teacher–student conferencing meetings and allowed her to provide specific feedback and guidance to each student. At the end of the project, Howe conducted a post-assessment using the rubrics. Students also did a self-assessment where they reflected on their Critical Thinking and Creativity. At every stage, the rubrics provide a clear lens and pathway to success. Howe says, “Depending on where they were in their process, as a class or in their own groups, we set up what criteria applied to their inquiry and discussed ways they could show and improve on their Critical Thinking and Creativity.”

Student friendly learning progressions illuminate the way for students, taking the intimidation out of learning life’s important skills. And when students get it, they appreciate it. As one student said, “Thank you for the opportunity to go out of my comfort zone and solve a seemingly impossible world issue. It has told me I am capable of more than I thought.”

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