

Evolution International School

A Position Paper on the School's Definition of High Quality Learning

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The school believes that high quality learning is intangible. It cannot be measured with a scale or a rubric but rather it comes from teachers with years of experience knowing what 'high quality learning' looks and feels like. This may seem counterintuitive in a time when education systems around the world are using metrics and scales but is in line with how many things in life are actually judged. Some examples:

Music – a musical performance is not judged using a rating system, rather the casual novice who enjoys listening to music will be able to tell you how the music made them feel, did it move them or were they impressed by the musical virtuosity. On the other hand, an expert will be able to listen to the piece for its technical excellence, the passion with which it was performed, the subtlety, and the flair. All these things are difficult if not impossible to measure but an expert can discern a quality performance just by listening to the piece.

Art – the expert will look at what the piece is telling them, the story, the feelings, the emotions, what is the artist trying to say. At the same time, they will look at the technical skills. How was the piece composed, what techniques were used, how original are the ideas and the techniques? The piece in itself, may look simplistic in style e.g. Hockney, Miro, Banksy, Emmin, Warhol, but is it using simplicity as a vehicle to make the viewer feel something different or to tell a message or to break boundaries in the way that Marcel Duchamp did? Experts may not always agree but generally, a great piece of art is something that many experts will agree on.

Science – scientists write peer reviewed articles about their research. The peer reviews do not attempt to rate, rank or score the articles, rather the experts look to the quality and depth of the research, replicability, the relevance to other works. An expert knows and 'feels' what a quality piece of research looks like and the biases that may be inherent in that work.

With all the above examples and more, the more experts that give an opinion, the better that general opinion will usually be in determining the quality of the work. And so it is for the expert teacher; he or she will use their professional judgement based on their own internal database of years of looking at students' work. They will be able to internally place that work on their own scale of excellence. It need not and often cannot be written down due to the complexity of the factors at play and the changing nature of the quality being expected or required. The more teachers that have the opportunity to look at students' work and discuss and compare across grades and subjects, the greater the validity of the judgements and the feedback that can be given to students.

And so we come to the question; what constitutes 'high quality learning' at Evolution. There is no one clear definition as it depends on the task in hand, the subject, the grade level and the changing expectations as the bar is raised ever higher. But in general, here are some guiding points:

- The work shows depth of understanding

- There is evidence either of original thinking or a synthesis of prior learning
- Material is presented in an appropriate way for the message/information to be given to the audience
- The work is organized and structured to lead the intended audience to a clear understanding of the material/subject matter
- There is a level of higher order thinking that has gone beyond the normal expectations for that grade level
- The work extends beyond the boundaries of what was taught by the teacher