



# EXPEDITIONARY LEARNING

## The Who, What, and Why of Checking for Understanding

*Excerpts from Leaders of Their Own Learning*

**Table 2.5 The Who, What, and Why of Checking for Understanding**

What Do Teachers Do?	What Do Students Do?	What's the Result?
Create quality learning targets and assessments and ensure that students understand what is expected of them.	Make an effort to understand the learning targets and connect them with the purpose of each lesson and learning activity.	Students have greater engagement and ownership of learning. They understand the purpose of their work.
Build a classroom culture of trust and collaboration.	Students communicate honestly about what they understand and what they don't.	Students can identify when they are struggling. Teachers can address gaps in understanding.
Preplan strategic questions to assess understanding throughout the lesson.	Support thinking and ideas with evidence.	Teachers can target questions to ensure they are driving at the learning target.
Build lesson plans that support students in meeting learning targets, emphasize student participation, and include ongoing checks for understanding throughout.	Monitor their own understanding throughout a lesson and advocate for support as needed; support peers with their understanding.	Teachers quickly catch students who may be struggling. Students stay on track with learning targets and can continue to close the gap between where they are and where they need to be.
Check for whole-class understanding using a variety of techniques and make adjustments to instruction as necessary. Ensure that all students are included.	Self-assess progress in relation to a specific learning target.	Teachers and students can make informed decisions about next moves (e.g., offering or attending an additional guided-practice session before moving into independent practice).
Check for individual understanding using a variety of techniques and use data to make decisions about next instructional steps to meet the needs of all students.	Participate in class and turn in work (e.g., exit tickets, reflection journals, quizzes) that demonstrates progress in relation to one or more learning targets.	Teachers are able to make informed decisions about next instructional steps related to individual students (e.g., oral or written feedback, differentiated materials, and instruction in next lesson).
Teach students to set goals based on self-assessment of progress toward learning targets. Model good goals and make use of goal-setting guides to assist students.	Set goals for class time and ongoing projects. Use checking-for-understanding strategies to self-assess.	Students develop more independence in self-assessment and deeper understanding of learning targets.

Table 2.5 Continued

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<p>Over time build a repertoire of checking-for-understanding techniques to engage students with varied learning styles in self-assessment. Increasingly emphasize student ownership and capacity to self-assess.</p>	<p>Become more proficient at self-assessing their level of understanding as the variety of strategies employed by the teacher expands to meet their learning needs.</p>	<p>Students become increasingly aware and metacognitive about where they are in the learning process, and can use this information to guide their work. More students meet learning targets and do not fall behind as teachers can adapt instruction to meet the general and individual needs of the students. Students trust that their honest self-assessment will help them progress.</p>
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