

It is easy to overlook the final stage of the Big6™ process—Evaluation. Students complete the information search, give presentations, and turn in projects and papers, and teachers record grades. Now it's time for the next topic. Wait! Stop!

How will students internalize the stages of the information problem-solving process, recognize emerging aptitudes, or identify skills that need more practice? Evaluation, particularly self-evaluation, is a very important step toward self-improvement. Evaluation completes the process of information problem-solving.

appropriate questions asked by library media specialists and classroom teachers.

### **Evaluate Progress During Each Stage of the Information Search Process**

Continuous evaluation should occur during each stage of the Big6 process. For example, upon completion of their work each day, consider leaving 5–10 minutes for students to write in their research journals, engage in small- or large-group discussion, or record their impressions using a tape recorder.

During the project, young students can be prompted by responding to questions such as:

Of course, all students won't answer all of these questions each day—select 2 or 3 questions for the whole class or give small groups of students questions that focus on their particular needs. Ongoing evaluation should be tailored to fit the learning styles and intellectual requirements of each student.

### **Evaluate Product and Process Before Completion and Submission of Assignments**

Students must have the opportunity to evaluate their own efforts before turning in final products or delivering presentations. Too often students are content to turn in a first draft of a product. By having students self-evaluate before turning in assignments, they can fix potential problems and become aware that Evaluation is a recursive process. Students will understand that revisiting completed steps and making revisions is strongly encouraged!

Here are two types of evaluation instruments to encourage your students to demonstrate their best efforts and produce work that they (and you) are proud to display.

The first evaluation instrument is the scoring rubric (also called a scoring guide or checklist) that is used to assign a grade. The formal rubric will encourage students to rise to your standards and will clarify the expectations of the assignment. Sometimes upper elementary and middle school students can help create the scoring criteria, giving them greater buy-in and a reason to put more effort toward the final results. A rubric-generating tool is available at <<http://rubistar.4teachers.org>>.

The second type of self-evaluation is a set of developmentally appropriate questions a student can respond to in writing. Some self-evaluation questions allow a student to think about gathering and working with information.

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What does Evaluation mean in Big6 terms? The actual assessment of the final product (most often in the form of the grade given by teachers) is only a small part of Evaluation. Evaluation encompasses all of the activities by which students and teachers determine the level of students' skills and knowledge, as well as identify areas for improvement in performance, particularly in Big6 information problem-solving skills. A higher-level thought process

in itself, Evaluation can be accomplished even by young learners with guidance and age-

- What did I learn today?
- On what topic do I need help tomorrow?
- Which stage of the Big6 process did I work on today?
- Did I finish that Big6 stage?
- Where in my project will I start tomorrow?
- If I need help, whom should I ask?
- What information source will I use?
- How well did I work today?
- If I had a hard time focusing on my work, what caused my distractions?
- What can I do so that I am not distracted tomorrow?



By Barbara A. Jansen

	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4	Score
Note taking	Minimal notes turned in, no sources noted, disorganized	Adequate notes taken, few sources noted, somewhat organized	Notes taken, sources noted on most, organized	Thorough notes taken, sources noted on each, well organized	
Written paper	Paper unorganized, no original ideas, poorly written, missing bibliography, much too short or long	Paper somewhat organized, some original ideas, adequately written, bibliography included, correct length	Paper organized and adequately written with adequate original ideas, bibliography included, correct length	Paper well organized and thoughtfully presented, many original ideas, about 250 words, bibliography included in proper MLA style	

Figure 1: Sample 6th Grade Scoring Rubric

Other questions might encourage students to reflect on working with others.

After the project, you can use some of these questions with young students:

- What did I learn?
- What did I learn to do that I can use again? How can I use my new skill?
- Which part of my project did I do really well? What could I do better next time?
- Did I include the information I found about my subject?
- Which information sources were most useful?
- Which information sources did I need but did not have?
- What did I contribute to my group?
- What did I like best about doing this project?
- I think my grade will be \_\_\_\_\_ because . . . .

When students articulate such experiences in writing, they must think deeply and make valuable connections that might otherwise be overlooked in the learning process. Classroom teachers and library media specialists can gain insights into the students' view of the benefit and less desirable outcomes of an assignment and gather

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evidence of affective behaviors (such as attitudes toward learning and cooperative work) that might otherwise be difficult to assess. Students should submit the written evaluation, along with their notes and final project.

Checklists for evaluating all steps of the Big6 process, general assignments, writing, and science fair projects are available on the Big6 for Kids Web site <[www.big6.com/kidsshowarticle.php?id=385](http://www.big6.com/kidsshowarticle.php?id=385)>.

### When Should Students Have Access to Self-evaluation Guides?

Students need to know the assignment expectations and key information problem-solving skills early in the Big6 process. I recommend furnishing students with the scoring and self-evaluation instruments soon after discussing Task Definition. For example, providing the rubric scoring guide and self-evaluation before students begin to organize and present the information gives them a standard with which to

compare their result. Allow and encourage students to revisit stages of the Big6 to fix any inadequate parts of a product before turning in their final work. Classroom teachers and library media specialists who collaborate on the assignment should read the student self-evaluations to determine which strategies are most effective and which strategies need to be modified before the next Big6 activity. ■

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