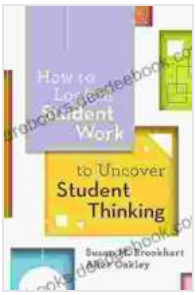
How to Look at Student Work to Uncover Student Thinking



How to Look at Student Work to Uncover Student Thinking by Susan M. Brookhart

4.7 out of 5

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As educators, we are constantly seeking ways to improve our teaching practices. One essential aspect of this is gaining a deep understanding of our students' thinking. By examining their work, we can gain valuable insights into their strengths, weaknesses, and thought processes.

This article provides a comprehensive guide to analyzing student work to uncover their thinking. We will explore different methods for qualitative and quantitative analysis, and discuss how to use data from student work to drive instruction.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis involves examining student work for patterns, themes, and insights that cannot be easily quantified. This method is particularly

useful for understanding students' thought processes, conceptual understanding, and problem-solving abilities.

There are several techniques for qualitative analysis, including:

- **Coding:** Assigning labels or categories to specific aspects of student work, such as ideas, misconceptions, or thought patterns.
- **Annotation:** Writing notes or comments directly on student work to highlight key ideas or patterns.
- **Freewriting:** Writing down thoughts, observations, and insights about student work as it is examined.
- **Concept mapping:** Creating visual representations of students' ideas and how they connect to each other.

When conducting qualitative analysis, it is important to be open-minded and avoid making assumptions about students' thinking. The goal is to understand students' perspectives and gain insights into their learning process.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis involves analyzing student work using numerical data. This method is useful for measuring student achievement, identifying trends, and evaluating the effectiveness of instruction.

There are several techniques for quantitative analysis, including:

- **Frequency analysis:** Counting the number of times a particular idea, concept, or skill appears in student work.

- **Error analysis:** Identifying and classifying common errors in student work to identify misconceptions or areas of weakness.
- **Statistical analysis:** Using statistical methods, such as mean, median, and standard deviation, to analyze data from student work.

When conducting quantitative analysis, it is important to select appropriate metrics and use valid and reliable data collection methods.

Using Data from Student Work to Drive Instruction

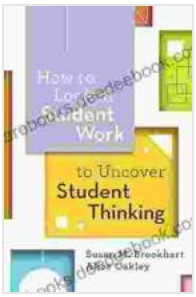
Once student work has been analyzed, the data can be used to inform and improve instruction. This includes:

- **Identifying students' strengths and weaknesses:** Analyzing student work can help teachers identify areas where students are excelling and areas where they need additional support.
- **Adjusting instruction:** Data from student work can help teachers make informed decisions about how to adjust their instruction to meet the needs of their students.
- **Providing targeted feedback:** Analysis of student work can help teachers provide specific and meaningful feedback that addresses students' individual needs.
- **Assessing student learning:** Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of student work can be used to assess student learning and provide evidence of their progress.

Examining student work is a powerful tool for uncovering student thinking and improving instruction. By utilizing qualitative and quantitative analysis

methods, educators can gain valuable insights into their students' learning process, identify areas for improvement, and provide targeted support to help them succeed.

Remember, the process of examining student work is an ongoing one. By continuously collecting and analyzing data, educators can gain a deeper understanding of their students and make informed decisions to improve their teaching practices.



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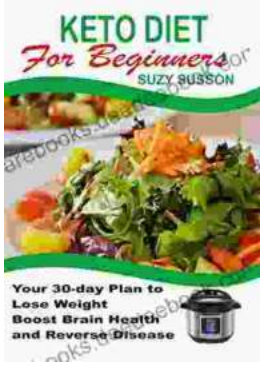

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