Badge #5 - Part 3: Evaluation and Assessment

Evidence of Learning...

1. Reflect on Grant Wiggin's interview responses:
2. Explain in 3-5 sentences if you agree with his statements. Why or why not?
3. Choose at least two of his responses to reflect on in 3-5 sentences.
4. Beyond The Article: Identify one strategy you use for assessing students that you would share with a new teacher? Here are some items you might wish to consider:
   1. In what ways do you now incorporate technology in your assessments of students?
   2. What resonated most with you in the article about the importance of thoughtful assessments of your students?

I strongly agree with Grant Wiggins' distinction between "testing" and "assessment." As he points out, tests provide a snapshot of a student's knowledge, while assessment, especially performance- or project-based assessment, paints a more complete picture of learning. In my biology classroom, I have seen students perform well on multiple-choice quizzes yet struggle to apply concepts in labs, claim-evidence-reasoning work, or real-world scenarios. Using assessment as a broader measure ensures that I assess both understanding and skill, which is really important in a science classroom.

I also resonate with his comments on considering assessment before lesson planning, often referred to as backward design. We had the good fortune of working in person with Grant Wiggins and his UBD framework many years ago as relatively new teachers at Sweet Home. He explained that by thinking first about what evidence will demonstrate student understanding, we can structure labs, discussions, and projects to align with clear learning objectives. For example, when teaching genetics, we designed a Punnett square activity that culminates in a real-world application project, showing whether students can apply Mendelian principles to predict traits in hypothetical populations of flowers they were growing as owners of a plant nursery. This approach ensures that lessons are purposeful and outcomes-driven rather than just "fun activities." Students got a chance to "show what they know" in a scenario that they might experience in real life.

One strategy I frequently use and would share with a new teacher is formative assessment through digital exit tickets. Using tools like ThinkTech, I can quickly gauge understanding at the end of a lesson and adjust the next day's instruction accordingly. This combines Wiggins' ideas about evidence of learning with the efficiency of technology. What resonated most from the article is the emphasis on assessment as an ongoing process that informs instruction, rather than a single endpoint. Thoughtful, continuous assessment allows me to better meet each student's needs and help them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are so necessary for success with the new NGSS/NYSSLS curriculum.