

Learning Tool Definition & Checklist

Generally speaking, a learning tool is something a student uses to work through big ideas, concepts or processes while demonstrating his or her thinking, planning and/or decision-making on the way to creating, performing or responding to art. The following list can be used as a checklist for a learning tool. Not all learning tools will satisfy all definitions. But generally speaking the more definitions a learning tool satisfies, the stronger the learning tool.

TOOLS:

- _____ Are customized steps to help students reach larger learning goals.
- _____ Create observable evidence of learning.
- _____ Clarify what students know and don't know.
- _____ Allow the teacher to see/hear (and intervene) when students don't understand.
- _____ Focus learning and help support students as they work toward that learning.
- _____ Lead to and connect with other tools in the process of meeting larger learning goals.
- _____ Help students synthesize knowledge and meaning.
- _____ Are building blocks that enable students to step into and through difficult concepts or processes to reach predetermined learning goals.
- _____ Are pathways that lead to depth and clarity in learning.
- _____ Add to the meaning-making in the classroom

When using a strong learning tool, each student will most often arrive at his or her own "right" answer or create a unique product. A strong learning tool, especially in arts instruction designed around one the three large processes—create, perform or respond, will usually NOT result in each student arriving at the same answer or creating the same product. Worksheets usually ask students to arrive at the same answer. Step-by-step directions to create identical products with small variations are usually not true learning tools.