Bednar, et al (1991) define two ways which constructivist learning can be evaluated. They suggest that one method would evaluate how well students were able to function within a content domain, and whether they could use the tools and understandings of the domain to solve problems within that domain. If they are involved in an authentic task, then evaluation would assess whether the student successfully completed that task. The second method suggested would have students reflect on the processes whereby they came to their conclusions and document this process. Jonassen (1991b) states that it is the process of knowledge acquisition which should be evaluated, not any product or observable behavior. (Is this reverse behaviorism?) According to Jonassen, evaluating how learners go about constructing their knowledge is more important than the resulting product, suggesting that evaluative procedures must become a part of the instructional process. Jonassen also feels that goal free evaluation could be an important part of constructivist assessment, since that would allow the evaluator to be unbiased by the goals of instruction. Cole (1992) thinks the evaluation of the constructive learning process can be improved by adding multiple evaluators who have a range of expertise in the area being studied and who represent multiple perspectives. This allows the teacher to play a facilitative coaching role while external sources would be responsible for summative decisions. Cole (1992) also disagrees with Jonassen’s (1991b) statement about goal-free evaluation, stating that in most authentic tasks, there are very measurable goals which can be used to identify successful completion of that task.

It is my feeling that a combination of these approaches look promising as an indicator of growth. As well, traditional approaches such as the collection of items in a portfolio, case study analysis or student self-evaluation would certainly prove useful as well.

Below are some excerpts about constructivist evaluation from a web article entitled "The Impact of Constructivism (and Postmodernism) on ID Fundamentals". Wilson, Teslow, & Osman-Jouchoux

Student Assessment

- Incorporate assessment into the teaching product where possible. Technologies are available for incorporating continuous, "dynamic assessment" into learning materials
Evaluation of Constructivist Learning (Lajoie & Lesgold, 1992). Assessment can then be seamlessly integrated into meaningful learning experiences and not tacked on at the end.

- Critique and discuss products grounded in authentic contexts, including portfolios, projects, compositions, and performances. Use of work products can complement more direct, traditional measures of knowledge acquisition and understanding (Cates, 1992). Include different perspectives in the critiquing process.

- Evaluate processes as well as products. The cognitive apprenticeship model offers a number of strategies for reflecting on process: debriefings, abstracted replays, dramatizations, interviews, group discussions, knowledge telling, co-investigation, and post-mortems of problem-solving activities (Collins & Brown, 1987; McLellan, 1993; Gay & Mazur, 1993).

- Use informal assessments within classrooms and learning environments. Informal assessments refer primarily to teacher observations of eye contact, body language, facial expressions, and work performance. These observations can complement formal assessments as a basis for instructional adjustments.

Further Web Sources for Evaluation of Constructivist Learning:

- Alternate Assessment
- ERIC resources for Alternative Assessment
- Miami Museum of Science-The pH Factor/Constructivism and the Five E's - click the Evaluate button