

Within and across the Primary Curriculum

Assessing for Learning

Summer 2010 PS7

In this advice sheet we consider classroom-based assessment for learning and what makes **assessment for learning** effective and we attempt to provide key information for **Assessment Leaders** and **class teachers**.

A well-known definition of Assessing for Learning is

'the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there'

(Assessment Reform Group, 2008)

However,

*"deciding 'where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there' has sometimes been (mis)interpreted as an exhortation to teachers to (summatively) test their students frequently to assess the levels they attain on prescribed national/state scales in order to fix their failings and target the next level ... **In contrast the primary aim of Assessment for Learning is to contribute to learning itself.**"*

Position Paper on Assessment for Learning from the 3rd international conference on Assessment for Learning, Dunedin, NZ March 2009

Guidance for Assessment Leaders for promoting the effective use of AfL

Assessment Leaders oversee assessment practice in all areas of the curriculum and should:

- ▶ promote a culture that supports the ten principles of Assessment for Learning

Assessment for Learning:

- is part of effective planning
- focuses on how children learn
- is central to classroom practice
- is a key professional skill
- is sensitive and constructive
- fosters motivation
- promotes understanding of goals and criteria
- develops the capacity for self-assessment
- helps learners know how to improve
- recognises all educational achievement.

and:

- ▶ ensure that assessment information effectively supports learning
- ▶ use assessment information to identify strengths, address issues relating to pupil progress and inform intervention programmes
- ▶ promote understanding that good learning and teaching will lead to good test outcomes and the raising of standards
- ▶ encourage the belief that intelligence can be developed and that ability is not fixed
- ▶ monitor and evaluate learning and teaching throughout the school
- ▶ ensure that every school policy reflects assessment for learning principles
- ▶ understand and monitor the different uses of assessment information
- ▶ make clear that pupils' progress cannot be gauged by test results alone.

What Assessment for Learning is, and what it certainly is NOT!

'Used effectively AfL is a powerful way of raising standards in schools and is what good teachers do all the time. It is NOT another initiative, fad or passing phase.'

(Managing Assessment for Learning, AAIA publication, 2009)

One of the benefits of the KS1 assessment arrangements introduced in 2005 was the **focus on assessment for learning**, with the shift from the 'snapshot on the day' to evidence that 'builds a picture of what children can do', with on-going assessment informing professional judgements.

The government's **Making Good Progress** pilot with a number of Local Authorities

acknowledges the impact of ongoing assessment for learning using **APP (Assessing Pupil Progress)** and 'single level' tests to support teacher assessment judgements.

'Schools that are already strong in good and robust AfL practices are better placed to adopt APP materials to assess pupil progress, for example, developing talk partners in mathematics has enabled children to self-assess their mathematical understanding.'

Headteacher, Maria Maslin 2009

Guidance for Class Teachers in the use of Assessment for Learning – some practical suggestions



‘Students must be actively engaged in the learning process – learning has to be done by them, it cannot be done for them...they have to close the gap between what they don’t know and what they want to know and they need to be taught the skills to close the gap.’

Christine Harrison and Sally Howard,
Inside the Primary Black Box (2009)

Planning with children: Discuss planning for topics/themes with children, taking their ideas into consideration for activities and/or content so children see what they are aiming for. Mind maps help identify gaps in knowledge so that children (and the teacher) see what they need to learn. Learning objectives/intentions (LOs) and success criteria (SC) within the planning are generally shared during lessons. Children

need to understand the purpose of learning: **not just the ‘what’ and ‘how’, but the ‘why’.** Returning to the LO during the lesson, with mini-plenary sessions, can be helpful for children to check they are ‘on track’.

Learning partners: Children share/discuss their ideas with learning partners (talk partners, response partners). Partners may change on a daily (or weekly) basis to ensure fairness. (Being realistic, there is always someone that children don’t want to be paired with!)

Learning journals/personal learning log: Children jot down ideas, write stories, plan and re-draft, or draw mind maps in personal notebooks that are not necessarily marked by the teacher, although the teacher should periodically ask permission to read them (just to check that they are not being used inappropriately). These may be taken out at playtime and/or taken home.

Peer marking: This works well when children (of roughly the same ability) take turns to read their work to each other. As they spot an error, they stop and change it. They then swap and read their partner’s work out loud, so they find errors that might have been missed (a double check) – and they ‘play at’ being the teacher (for example, ‘you don’t spell ‘sortd’ like that... you’ve missed an ‘e’ out’).

Work gallery/showcase: Children’s work is displayed to demonstrate particular features and may include thought provoking questions: for example, Why do you think this is a great paragraph? What does Jamie’s graph tell us about...? If work is changed on a regular basis every child’s contribution can be valued.

Effective marking/feedback: Providing feedback as children work helps them think about how to correct errors and make improvements straight away (without having to wait till the following day, when the work is no longer fresh in their minds). Clues and prompts should be given to promote thinking – **the onus should be on the child to find what to put right or improve – because ‘I’m told and I forget, I do and I remember’.**

No hands up: ‘No hands up’ increases thinking time so children organise their thoughts and ideas. ‘I want you to think about this question and in a minute or so I am going to listen to your ideas.’ If teachers ask children **‘Do you think?’** questions every child can contribute without fear of being wrong. For example, ‘How many legs has a ladybird?’ has only one answer. ‘How many legs do you think a ladybird has?’ – has several answers so more may offer ideas. (Shirley Clarke: ‘Formative Assessment in Action’ 2005)

Self assessment: Many children self-assess using traffic lights. For example, red = ‘need for more help’, amber = ‘I am a bit unsure’, and green = ‘can get on without further help’. ‘Thumbs up/down’ is used in a similar way. Some assess themselves at the end of their work, putting a traffic light colour to show how they feel they have done. Some teachers ask children to stop, refer to the learning objective and check their work is relevant and fulfils the success criteria.

Differentiation: Tom Maggock www.teachernet.gov.uk 2007 suggests that teachers might organise ‘learning zones’ where children make choices about the challenge for their work. Teachers may need to intervene, but usually children are able to choose very sensibly, and have a good understanding of their own abilities. Obviously, this needs careful monitoring.

The following questions and answers (taken from a LA project) show children's views about AfL

When working in class, do you work together and discuss how to solve problems?

'It's good because lots of people know lots of different things ...'

'We kind of find out what we both think before we answer.'

'Yes...we put ourselves into groups and discuss whatever the teacher has told us to do and we listen to each other's ideas....'

'We normally like being in a group with clever people because you learn more information from them...'

'I would put mixed groups: pairs of boys and pairs of girls around the same table...'

'If there were different subjects I would put them in different groups.'

What kind of feedback do you get from the teacher? How do you know how you are doing?

'The teacher normally goes through things and they can help you.'

'I get ticks and smiley faces.'

'I try and work it out again if I get it wrong.'

'He tells us or he writes in your book, he gives you smiley faces, stars ... and we have a marking scheme. Sometimes you have to take work home to put it right... I have learnt other ways of doing things at home... your mum and dad's methods are old-fashioned but they are easy to understand...'

'Well we get marks and that's how we know we are

improving... when we get our papers back and we see the ticks on them... sometimes I do maths at home.'

'Sometimes we have a target – we have individual targets for maths, writing and reading.'

'We always have the learning objective at the start of a lesson.'

The **Assessment for Learning Strategy** introduced in 2008 followed 'Excellence and Enjoyment' 2003 with the intention of

'making assessment for learning more widespread, systematic and consistent so that:

► **every child** knows how they are doing, and understands what they need to do to improve and how to get there

► **every teacher** is equipped to make well-founded judgements about pupils' attainment, understands the concepts and principles of progression, and knows how to use their assessment judgements to forward plan,

particularly for pupils who are not fulfilling their potential

► **every school** has in place structured and systematic assessment systems for making regular, useful, manageable and accurate assessments of pupils, and for tracking their progress

► **every parent and carer** knows how their child is doing.'





Introducing the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors, CIEA

The CIEA is a professional membership organisation that offers a wide range of assessment-related tools and resources across the subjects.

The CIEA can help you to improve your assessment-related knowledge, skills and capabilities to meet the challenge of creating a personalised pathway for all your learners' needs.

The CIEA offers:

- ▶ **Support** via a wide range of tools, resources and structured CPD opportunities that will enable you to develop your assessment-related knowledge and skill. Nearly all benefits of membership are offered via the CIEA website, one of the largest assessment-related resources in Europe.

- ▶ **Recognition** of your role, experience and expertise in assessment through structured membership grades at all stages of your career allowing you to use post 'nominal' or 'designatory' letters that demonstrate your commitment to good assessment practice.

- ▶ **Enhanced professional status** through membership of the Institute as well as the opportunity to earn the highest individual professional designation available in assessment today – Chartered Educational Assessor (CEA)

The CIEA strongly believes that more effective assessment leads to more focused teaching and better learning.

Joining the CIEA could be your first step towards significantly improving your assessment skills and ultimately the practice of assessment in your primary school.

Free trial membership offer!

The CIEA is offering you the opportunity to register your primary school for a free one-month trial membership. The trial is without obligation, includes full access to the Member Area on the CIEA website PLUS a complimentary copy of the termly magazine, *Make the Grade*.

Simply call 0845 6722123 or email your name, role and primary school name and address to info@ciewa.org.uk. Remember to quote 'CfSA10'. Visit: www.ciewa.org.uk

CIEA Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors

Introducing the Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment, AAIA

AAIA is the Association for those with a professional interest in the assessment, recording and reporting of achievement.

The aim of the Association is to promote pupil progress and achievement through best practice in assessment and advance educational practice and professional expertise in assessment:

- ▶ by providing a forum for the exchange of views and the dissemination of ideas, for example through our website
- ▶ by the publication of materials that exemplify effective assessment practice
- ▶ through regional meetings and conferences which provide professional support for members and an

opportunity to guide the work of the Executive

- ▶ through national conferences which encourage debate, provide an opportunity to share ideas and explore recent developments in assessment.

We also aim to develop a professional response to educational issues involving assessment:

- ▶ through formal and informal meetings with governmental and non-governmental departments and bodies, other national organisations, professional associations and educational establishments
- ▶ through working groups of members that address specific issues or areas of work
- ▶ by nominating representatives to attend key seminars and conferences concerned with assessment issues
- ▶ by responding to national consultations and reviews.

To support schools and teachers in developing quality AfL processes AAIA produces and sells publications. Notably:

- ▶ *Managing Assessment for Learning* (second edition 2009)
- ▶ *Guidelines for Assessment Leaders in Primary Schools* (2008)
- ▶ *Assessment for Learning: A Guide for School Governors* (2008)
- ▶ And a new publication – *A Guide to Good Practice for Teaching Assistants* – will be available early in the summer term 2010.

Many schools are already members of the association so why not join us. Further information is available on the website. Visit: www.aaia.org.uk

