

**Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors
National Assessment Conference 2009**

Quality assuring assessment and embedding good practise

1. Address from under Secretary of State

Sarah McCarthy-Fry, MP

- Assessment is at the core it is essential to all education
- Assessment should be a natural part of school life it should not be stressful
- What does good assessment mean ?
 - Putting systems in place so every child can succeed
 - Children should understand where they are and know what they need to do to succeed.
- We need a school system fit for the 21st century, so each student can achieve their best, a personalised approach.
- We need to treat testing as a clear indication of their learning
- Children need to be able to progress at their own rate when they are ready
- Children's improvements need to be underpinned
- The diplomas for 14-19 year olds place an emphasis on transferable skills, these diplomas have now been accepted allowing pupils to access undergraduate courses.
- These diplomas require rigorous assessment through the lead assessor and domain assessor
- Testing needs to be meaningful
- Informed teaching and good assessment is the key

2. What are quality and good practise in assessment for learning ?

Professor Gordon Stobart, Institute of Education

- Good effective assessment takes place when it leads to quality learning
- The spirit vs the letter – teachers need to develop a deep understanding and enter into the spirit of assessment
- How do we get quality learning ?
 - Children need to build on what they know
 - They need to be able to make sense of what they are learning
 - Only the learner can learn
- If we are really learning it makes a difference to us, the way we think and act
- Our focus has to be on the learning
- What forms of classroom assessment will help effect classroom learning ?
 - We need to find out where learners are at through questioning, dialogue and analysis of misconceptions
 - We should be modelling and giving examples
 - We should make clear the learning intentions
 - Feedback needs to be meaningful and useful for the learner, every child needs it to be tailored to them
 - Learners should self monitor
- Assessment for learning should decide where the learners are, where they need to go and how best to get there
- So when does the spirit give way to the letter ?
 - When processes become ritualised
 - When the quantitative replace the qualitative
 - When practises are used and not understood
- Children need to make sense of what they are learning themselves
- We need to ask does the lesson contain personal autonomy for the learner ?
- The specification of learning intentions and success criteria need to be clear I purpose, flexible and negotiated

- We need to preserve the spirit and challenge the letter

3. Building Confidence in Standards, the need for an empowered qualifications regulator

Dr Mike Cresswell, Director General AQA

- Why do we have a perpetual debate regarding examinations ?
- Exams standards are not directly observable
- What is being assessed ?
- There is public concern about standards of assessment and examinations
- Should learners continuously be assessed or just once ? Which is more valid ?
- Comparability of standards between years, boards and subjects
- Why are there no established measures to monitor comparability ?
- Reality about standards
 - Comparability over time is generally ok over short periods (a few years), but it is difficult to assess over longer periods
 - Comparability between subjects
 - Grading standards are broadly in line between boards, much cominality in what is examined and how
- We need to encompass diplomas
- We need a stronger regulation of standards,
- We need a regulator to ensure boards set the same standards

4. Teacher Assessment vs Exams

Professor Peter Tymms, Director, CEM

- Is teacher assessment unfair ?
 - Studies have shown LEAs have hardly any impact on teacher assessment and schools have little impact. It is the teacher who is the absolute key and has the biggest impact on teacher assessment.
 - The best teachers are those who really know and can judge their pupils
 - Is teacher bias affecting teacher assessment ?
 - Are they favouring one group of pupils ?
 - Age, behaviour, class, gender, ethnicity and ability can all be subconscious biases
 - We need to judge teacher assessments against other teacher judgements to ensure reliability
 - Is it acceptable for teachers to assess their own pupils for high state exams ?
- Are exams simply snapshots ? Are they unrepresented ?
 - Are the tests fair to every child – dialect, class ?
 - Tests that require more creative answers need teacher judgement
 - Is a timed test restrictive on a pupil ?
 - Pupils can have varying degrees of stress placed upon them
 - We need to match format to content, somethings must be assessed by judgement – poetry, art somethings are better suited to test – spelling, mental arithmetic
- Judgements or tests ? Should we do both ?
 - How can judgements be kept from bias ?
 - There are no easy solutions