



# AfL

Assessment for Learning  
A Practical Guide

# AfL

## Assessment for Learning

### A Practical Guide



## Foreword

It was not a particularly memorable day as days go, but the impact of our decision that afternoon had far-reaching and hugely positive consequences. It was the day in 1997 that my colleagues and I in the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) made the decision to commission Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam to review existing research on formative assessment. We had been trying for almost 10 years to stem the growing tendency across the UK to use external tests for creating school league tables, target setting and appraising teachers, all of which more or less ignored the huge potential of classroom assessment to support learning. However, the ‘accountability’ juggernaut was not for turning, even though the Blair dynasty’s clarion call of “Education! Education! Education!” had not yet begun to ring hollow. It was the day we decided to up the ante and make it our target to resurrect assessment by teachers, not to abandon testing, but to refocus assessment activities where they should be, on pupil learning.

The King’s College pair had been long-term advocates of formative assessment and among the best researchers in the international assessment field. We knew the Nuffield-funded commission would be in good hands, but the 10 years since have demonstrated that their work was to spark a sea-change in thinking about assessment. Two publications did it: the scholarly review itself – all 70+ pages of it – and a little pamphlet: *Inside the Black Box*. With these Paul and Dylan lit the blue touch paper and we followed suit by stoking the fire. We set out the key features of using assessment to support learning and promoted the concept and processes of Assessment for Learning (AfL), as it became widely known. The power of AfL to improve pupil learning and raise standards was plain for all to see, and soon everyone was sitting up and taking notice.

And why? The reasons are probably legion, but at the heart of them is the fact that teachers instinctively knew that assessment should not be a separate process that is simply ‘done to’ students. It should be fundamentally integrated with learning and teaching. Once teachers reflected on the AfL philosophy and tried out the key elements (including sharing learning intentions, effective questioning and peer assessment), they quickly took ownership of it. As David Hargreaves put it in 2005: *“Assessment for learning is spreading rapidly, in part because ... teachers find that it works – the scientific evidence and the practice evidence are aligned and mutually supportive”*.

But that is only part of the story. How did teachers find out about AfL? How did they begin to appreciate that those many, short interactions with pupils in every lesson had so much potential to improve learning? Certainly the work of the ARG helped with research outputs and projects such as *Beyond the Black Box*, *Assessment for Learning: Ten Principles*, *Testing, Motivation and Learning*, and *Assessment Systems of the Future*. Excellent communicators of the ‘message’, such as Ruth Sutton, Shirley Clarke and our own Brian Yeats, Sharon Cousins and Sandra Hayes, among others too numerous to mention, also inspired many teacher gatherings.

Arguably, however, just as this practical guide illustrates, it was agencies such as CCEA and the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) that really made it happen through investing time, funds and the expertise of the aforementioned colleagues. Much of the groundwork took place in the early 2000s before the large-scale AfL Action Research Project got underway in 2004, with second and third expansion phases formally lasting until 2007. However, the project very much lives on in the various schools involved and at a systems level in all schools through AfL's comprehensive endorsement in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. In particular, it made substantial contributions to contemporary activities such as Ruth Leitch's project Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning (CPAL), which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and the ARG's Nuffield-funded Analysis and Review of Innovation in Assessment (ARIA). At the centre of all of these activities, one observation is indisputable. Just as it is only learners who can learn (teachers cannot do it for them), it is only teachers who can change their own practices by careful self-reflection on what they currently do and how it might be improved. As teachers, we must all be learners too and ensure that AfL does not become a set of teaching tips that ultimately fall into unthinking routines of traffic lights, no hands up, WALT boards and so on. We must also be wary of what Mary James considered was happening in policy-making circles in 2004 in England (not, it should be emphasised, in Northern Ireland, Wales or Scotland!): "... *'assessment for learning' is becoming a catch-all phrase, used to refer to a range of practices. In some versions it has been turned into a series of ritualized procedures. In others it is taken to be more concerned with monitoring and record-keeping than with using information to help learning*".

This is why this resource is so important. The evaluations of the AfL Action Research Project showed that there is still work to be done. We need to keep visible and accessible the processes and benefits of assessment that support learning. We need to understand why such assessment is important and have the evidence to back it up. And most importantly, we need the testimony of teachers, illustrated in this handbook, to keep the momentum going.

The ARG was first constituted in 1989 as across the UK it began to become obvious that the multi-layered national curriculum assessments were disrupting learning and teaching (the 'oldies' will remember the hundreds of statements of attainment and their umbrella attainment targets!). I joined in 1994 only as the teacher voice against the overuse and misuse of external key stage testing was beginning to be heard (for example their dubious linking to the accountability of schools), and we gave vent to that voice also. Now, 15 years later, as we approach the winding up of ARG's activities in 2010, we have witnessed across the UK the wholesale endorsement of AfL and the growth of assessment by teachers for summative purposes.

There is already talk of an ARG Mark II, but whatever our past contribution may have been, or may be in the future, the key development is secured – a savvy and dynamic community of assessment practice that is the partnership of teachers and support professionals in Northern Ireland. I hope that this practical guide will prove to be another key element in supporting the partnership and promoting the most effective uses of assessment in Northern Ireland's classrooms.



John Gardner



# Contents

Foreword	i
Contents	iii
Introduction	v

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>What's Behind It?</b>	
	Constructivism	1
	Key Concepts	5
	A Mindset for Learning	9
	Motivation	15
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Elements of Practice</b>	
	Focus on Learning	19
	Effective Questioning	25
	Formative Feedback	29
	Scaffolding Reflection	33
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Implications for Leaders</b>	
	Planning & Monitoring Development in AfL	37
	Providing Information to Parents	43
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Impact on Learning</b>	
	Comments from the Northern Ireland AfL Action Research Project	45
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>Resources</b>	
	Resource 1: Overlapping Strategies of AfL and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (TSPC)	59
	Resource 2: General Guidelines for a Feedback Policy	60
	Resource 3: Outline Structure for Parents' Advice Literature	61
	Resource 4: Sample Parent Leaflet	63
	Resource 5: Raising Awareness PowerPoint	65
	Resource 6: Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning (CPAL)	67
	Resource 7: Assessment for Learning (AfL) Overview Poster	68
	Resource 8: The 4Rs Posters	69
	Resource 9: Learning to Learn Wall (Foundation Stage)	74
	<small>These resources are available for download from <a href="http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk">www.nicurriculum.org.uk</a> under 'Assessment' within both Key Stages 1&amp;2 and Key Stage 3.</small>	

Acknowledgements

# Introduction

**“Assessment which is explicitly designed to promote learning is the simple, most powerful tool we have for both raising standards and empowering lifelong learners.”**  
(*Beyond the Black Box*, Assessment Reform Group, 1999)

In 2004, a major Assessment for Learning (AfL) project titled the AfL Action Research Project began in 25 primary schools. Supported by CCEA and the Education and Library Boards (ELBs), over the next three years this extended to 65 primary and post-primary schools. The AfL Action Research Project encouraged teachers to experiment with aspects of AfL methodology by adapting the theory and principles of formative assessment to suit their own teaching context, in particular the research of Dylan Wiliam and Paul Black (*Inside the Black Box*). The emphasis was on building confidence and expertise. Teachers in each ELB had the support of a CASS officer and the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas within learning groups.

## Project Highlights

The project promoted four key elements of practice:

- a focus on the learning (clarity about and sharing of learning intentions and what counts as success);
- effective questioning (significance of questioning to improve learning);
- formative feedback (feedback that moves learning forward); and
- scaffolding reflection (developing self-critical, reflective learners).

Eighty percent of teachers involved in the project chose to share learning intentions and success criteria as their starting point. This was a logical first step; making the learning explicit and important by sharing it with pupils is a prerequisite for the other strategies. Within the first few months, teachers were describing positive changes:

- Pupils were more confident and more willing and able to talk about their learning.
- Teachers felt they were more tuned into pupils' learning needs and that they were developing a more sophisticated understanding of learning and teaching based on authentic evidence.

## About this Resource

Experiences from this three year project helped to shape the status of AfL in the Northern Ireland Curriculum. This resource has grown out of the AfL Action Research Project and is based on the learning and experiences of teachers and pupils who participated in it. It offers succinct advice and illustrates how schools can use assessment to promote learning, develop understanding and enhance practice.

It is designed to be a practical guide for teachers and Senior Management who are initiating, consolidating or embedding AfL practice in school – a tool that supports professional development and the development of a structured, coherent whole-school approach.

It includes first-hand accounts and pictorial examples of how teachers are implementing AfL in their classrooms. In addition, the outcomes of education, in terms of skills, dispositions and attitudes to learning, are emphasised throughout. The main messages are as follows:

- Assessment can be used not just to measure learning, but to **promote learning**.
- The **principles** underpinning AfL are important considerations; it's not just about adopting and adapting the practical strategies.
- Approaches need to be **personalised** to suit the particular needs of your pupils.
- There needs to be **time** and opportunity to observe, reflect and discuss in order to refine your ideas, beliefs and practices.

It's important to note that the four key AfL elements of practice are interrelated and can be delivered through different classroom approaches. Investing time in reflecting on and developing your knowledge and beliefs about learning will influence this practice and ensure that the strategies do not become mechanistic. Also, we suggest that you continue to adapt the strategies, contextualising them so that this pedagogy has a positive impact on your pupils and their learning. Like pupils, you need to reflect and learn from your experiences in systematic ways to build your knowledge base. You can advance your knowledge and practice by taking small steps and by learning from one another through ongoing whole-school dialogue.

To support you in this, Section 1: 'What's Behind It?' goes beyond the actual elements of practice and describes important considerations that, if embraced, foster the supportive learning environments that the curriculum promotes. Among these considerations is Carol Dweck's work on 'Mindsets', which is presented in Section 1 to support you as you help nurture pupils' independence, confidence and positive and robust mindsets for learning. Likewise, the '4Rs Posters' (Resource 8) have been designed to promote self-efficacy by making the repertoire of learning skills explicit; the posters emphasise to pupils that success in learning can be achieved through effort.

The 'Assessment for Learning (AfL) Overview Poster' (Resource 7) summarises the four key elements of practice and the theory underpinning each element. It is intended to be a useful reminder as you incorporate these into your classroom practice. It could also be shared with parents to help them understand the changing practices.

In the context of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, AfL should not be viewed in isolation. Consequently, the table in Resource 1 describes how the four AfL elements of practice and the seven classroom strategies for Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities overlap. Consideration of these classroom strategies can focus attention on what practical steps you can take throughout your school to ensure that your pupils become successful and confident learners. (More details on Thinking Skills strategies are available on pp.14-16 and pp.27-33 of the *Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities* booklet in your school's *Curriculum Support and Implementation Box*.)

In short, this guidance is about effective assessment practice, which is applicable to all age groups and Key Stages. We hope that you will engage with the messages so that AfL strategies become embedded in a meaningful way throughout your school.

The following symbols are used in Sections 2 and 4:



Views of Teachers



Views of Pupils

What's Behind It?

# Constructivism

Learning happens inside learners' heads – we can't learn for them by some special 'trick' of teaching.



Learners have to construct their own learning from what teachers give them. We can't put learning in their heads!

## What's this about?

Constructivism is a view of learning and teaching that has at its core a concept which might seem obvious: learning is something that happens inside the heads of learners. No matter how meticulously we plan or what marvellous strategies we use during teaching, we can't reach inside learners' heads and put the learning there. There is a gap between learning and teaching that *learners* have to negotiate in order to construct new knowledge, skills and attitudes – albeit with our skilled input and help.

This view strongly underpins what all teachers and school leaders know lies at the heart of good classroom practice: knowledge of individual learners' needs and quality teacher–pupil relationships. It is via these that the gap between learning and teaching may be more successfully bridged.



Success criteria being negotiated with pupils to enable them to manage their learning activity.

If they have to construct their own learning, it makes sense to help them to do it better!

## Why it's important

If we accept that learning is something that learners have to do (with our help), to improve the process of learning we must go beyond approaches that assume we can manage learning on pupils' behalf. The more we can do to help them master the *skills* of learning, the more able they will be to manage it themselves. This argument lies behind the 'Learning to Learn' movement (L2L) promoted by the Campaign for Learning and writers like Guy Claxton and Alistair Smith, as well as Thinking Skills and AfL approaches. In a nutshell, these are all approaches that put meat on the bones of pupils taking responsibility for managing their own learning.

They do, however, require us to commit time to teaching pupils how to learn. They require us to see learning as *part* of the curriculum, not simply the vehicle by which pupils access and internalise the curriculum. This view of learning is central to the current Northern Ireland Curriculum.

## How to go about it

The three components of successful classroom practice that encourage the development of independent learning skills are structure, skills and information.

While the desire to promote independent learning is a vital starting-point, it is these three elements of classroom practice that will help to ensure success.

### Structure

Consider how you could use components of classroom design to scaffold pupils' self-management. Classrooms with significant levels of independent learning tend to be much more structured. They have clear procedures for everything, from accessing and returning resources and pursuing learning activities, to using the teacher's feedback to make improvements in learning. Structure enables pupils to make good choices, especially when they are not sure what to do next.

Teachers who build structures, skills and information for their pupils help to foster independent learners!



### Skills

Invest time in helping pupils to develop their independent learning skills. Teach them how to ask and answer questions, how to use success criteria to negotiate learning activities and use feedback effectively, and how to manage the demanding skills of reflecting about their own (and others') learning.

### Information

Provide sets of information in child-friendly language that enable pupils to access support during their learning activities. This information may be in the form of success criteria or reminders of strategies and procedures, such as questioning and feedback. These play an important role in reducing the pressure on pupils' *memory* to hold such information. This can often make the difference between independence and over-reliance on you or their peers.



Sections 2 (Elements of Practice) and 4 (Impact on Learning) provide more detail and examples of successful classroom practice that you might find helpful for your school.



### More to think about

Think about the level of *risk* for pupils in your everyday classroom settings. If it is risky for them to answer questions (because they are afraid they might feel stupid if they give a wrong answer), how likely is it that they will engage?

Emphasise that it's okay to 'have a go' and that being wrong is an opportunity to learn.

Help your pupils to see a relationship between struggling and learning; if they are finding a task or challenge easy, then they're not really learning anything new! Point out that struggling and challenge are both indicators of *learning*, not failure.



What's Behind It?

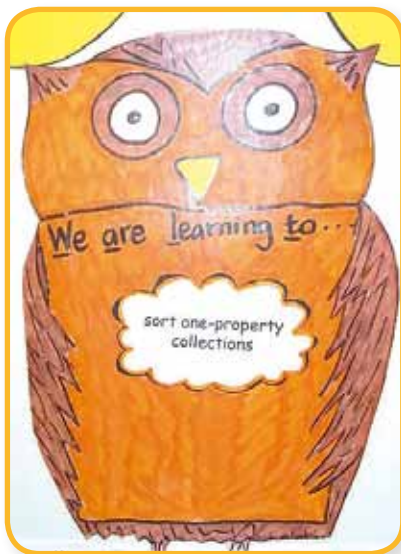
# Key Concepts

Learning is best served when pupils take responsibility for it and can transfer it across a range of contexts where it is both authentic and valuable.



## What's this about?

Apart from the overarching principle of constructivism, key concepts that underpin AfL are transferable learning, transparency and responsibility.



## Transferable learning

At the planning stage it is worth considering how transferable learning intentions are. It can be helpful to think of learning intentions that apply to many contexts as more valuable than those which are specific to only one concept. Life skills, such as working together and managing information, are good examples of highly transferable learning intentions.

## Transparency

AfL practice involves sharing a great deal of what was once the sole preserve of the teacher. For example, we let pupils in on the secret of success criteria, working *with* them to create tips on how to be successful in their work. We also show them how to provide feedback that prompts next steps for improvement, both for their peers and for themselves.

## Responsibility

Central to AfL is a commitment to enabling pupils to manage their own learning. It invests them with the skills and responsibility they need to make good choices as they negotiate learning challenges. We do not ask pupils to take on aspects of the traditional role of the teacher because it is fashionable, but because it is effective. It helps them raise the quality of their work, and it promotes their learning. One context where responsibility plays a central role is when pupils give feedback on their own and others' work using success criteria.

It all comes down to pupils knowing what 'good' looks like in any given learning context!

## Recognising what 'good' looks like

Put at its simplest, AfL focuses on pupils knowing what 'good' looks like in any given learning context. If they understand this, then they can manage the quality of their own work and become independent learners. If they don't know what 'good' looks like, they will require someone else to give them feedback and suggest their next steps for improvement. It all comes down to them becoming self-reliant learners.

### Why it's important

The core principles of AfL match up with those of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The curriculum aims to develop learners who can make informed and responsible choices throughout their lives, both as individuals and as contributors to society, the economy and the environment; AfL promotes the practice of pupils managing their own learning with the help of a teacher by using an array of strategies to identify and achieve small steps in their learning.



### How to go about it

#### Transferable learning

At the planning stage, ask yourself three sets of questions:

- What do my pupils most **need to learn** next? What is their most pressing need? How can I phrase this as a learning intention?
- Does this learning intention describe the **new learning** that pupils will achieve from their learning activity or the activity itself?
- If the learning intention does describe the learning, can I rephrase it to make it **transferable**, or is it too context-bound for this?

See 'Focus on Learning' in Section 2 for more details.

#### Transparency

Look for opportunities with the pupils in your class to model your skills of:

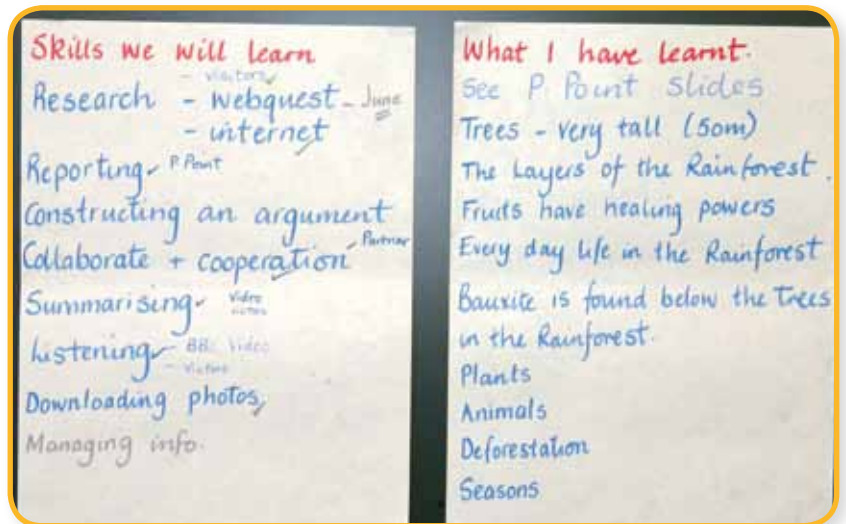
- setting success criteria;
- providing formative feedback; and
- asking critical questions and answering them.

Then you will be able to take time to teach your pupils these skills and provide low-risk contexts in which they can develop them.

#### Responsibility

Think about how much you feel able to trust your pupils to manage their own learning. Giving responsibility to pupils to provide feedback to others and self-assess needs to be carefully staged by degrees. It is important to avoid damaging pupils' confidence and self-esteem to the extent that pupils feel unable to 'have a go'.

Ask yourself how much trust you can place in your pupils' ability to manage their own learning.



### More to think about

An interesting experience of many teachers in all Key Stages is the realisation, often accompanied by a mixture of surprise and pride, that their pupils are both accurate and responsible when given the important task of assessing their own and others' work. When they have accessible criteria to follow, pupils are often very astute in determining quality. They tend to be equally astute in finding the most productive areas for improvement. AfL allows them to maximise this potential.

What's Behind It?

# A Mindset for Learning

A mindset is the belief we hold about our intellect and ability.



## What's this about?

Carol Dweck's theories of motivation, ability and intelligence offer important insights for teaching. She describes two mindsets or beliefs about our learning ability that affect how we respond to challenges: the fixed mindset and the growth mindset. While both mindsets are normal, if we believe that intelligence is fixed and can't change, this can limit and undermine our motivation and learning; believing that we are no good or hopeless at something gets in the way of learning.

Fixed Mindset: "What you have you have and that is all you get and you can't get any more of it."  
*David Perkins*

### Fixed (Performance) Mindset: valuing looking good

Having a fixed mindset is about believing that:

- learning potential and ability are fixed and can be measured, and **the goal is performance**; and
- ability, not effort, is the way to overcome challenges and setbacks.

Pupils with a fixed mindset think they've either 'got it' or they haven't. When they are faced with challenge they believe that their ability, not effort, should help them overcome the setback. So they can get used to coasting along on their talents and the idea that good grades prove their ability.

A negative mindset can become the barrier between knowing and doing: pupils really need to know the power of effort.

When these pupils experience failure, they see it as something deficient or lacking in themselves. They can crumble, showing a helpless response because of this negative '***I am just this smart and that is it***' mindset (Perkins). Linking failure to their own lack of ability can make them lack persistence, opt out of difficult learning and be reluctant to try new things. They can become overly concerned with looking good and feel bad if they don't look smart.

We can change our mindset, and the strategies in AfL contribute to the development of mastery orientated, resilient and resourceful learners.

### Growth (Mastery) Mindset: valuing learning

Having a growth mindset is about:

- being resilient in the face of frustration and failure; and
- having the ability to respond well to challenges, believing that effort can lead to success.

A growth mindset enables pupils to create and work towards **learning goals** because they believe in themselves as learners with the capacity to improve. It's about having a robust self-efficacy that shapes attitude, motivation and commitment to learning.

Pupils with a growth mindset tend to respond to failure by redoubling their efforts, because they have hope that they will succeed. The harder it gets, the harder they try. Seeing effort as the path to mastery, they persevere when the going gets tough and often talk themselves through difficulties. They have a positive, can-do, bit-by-bit mindset. The mastery response means that these pupils are more attentive to what they can learn than to how good they look or how bad they feel.

## Why it's important

Considering the two mindsets is helpful in understanding how the pedagogy of AfL can help pupils become self-directed, autonomous learners.

The table below emphasises the importance of building a culture of success that promotes a growth mindset, where everyone:

- believes they can achieve; and
- invests energy in improving learning (rather than focusing on getting everything right).

In order to experience mastery, it is necessary to fail, feel bad, and try again repeatedly until success occurs. Failure and feeling bad are necessary building blocks for ultimate success and feeling good.

Fixed (Performance) Mindset	Growth (Mastery) Mindset
<p>Pupils who value 'getting it right':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• believe that ability leads to success;</li> <li>• are concerned about being viewed as able and proving themselves;</li> <li>• gain satisfaction from doing better than others;</li> <li>• evaluate themselves negatively, giving up/ displaying helplessness when the task is too difficult; and</li> <li>• show concern for proving competence.</li> </ul>	<p>Pupils who value learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• believe that effort leads to success;</li> <li>• believe in their ability to improve and learn;</li> <li>• gain satisfaction from personal successes;</li> <li>• are more likely to have a go anyway and show great persistence with difficult tasks; and</li> <li>• show concern for improving competence.</li> </ul>

*Adapted from Chris Watkins, 2001*

The success and improvement culture of AfL makes a positive contribution to building mastery mindsets.

Pupils need to believe from a very early age that they can develop their intelligence by:

- making an effort; and
- using the right techniques or strategies in their learning.

Formative feedback focused on success criteria ensures that they know making an effort can lead to success and improvement.

## How to go about it

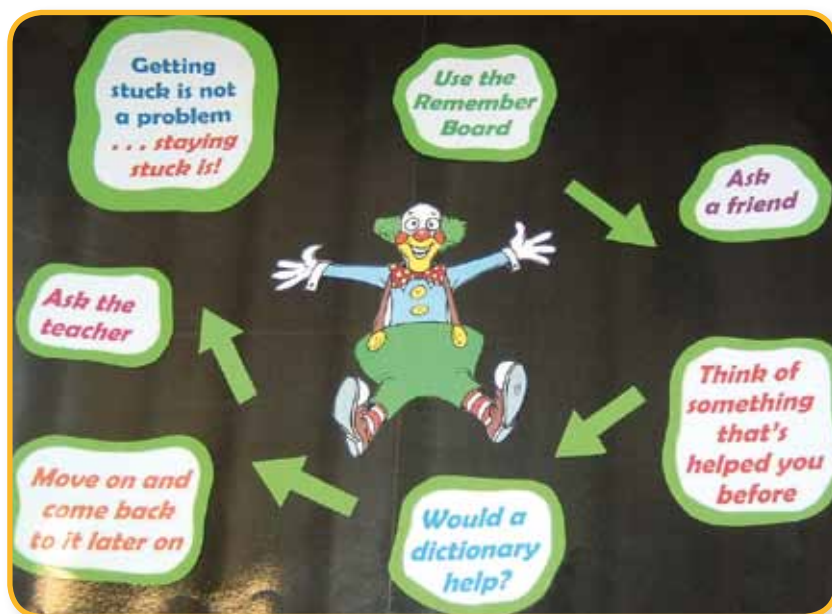
### Promoting a growth mindset

Consider the following in relation to your school:

- **The context for learning:** How does the classroom culture support risk taking, learning from failure and mistakes? Is effort talked about and valued?
- **The content of learning:** Are tasks challenging? Are success criteria, questioning and feedback used to advance and support learning?

Encourage pupils to develop skills, dispositions and strategies that help them keep going and invest effort in a task.

Getting stuck is not the problem; staying stuck is!



Refer to the ideas in the '4Rs Posters' ('Be Resourceful', 'Be Resilient', 'Be Reflective' and 'Be Reciprocal') as you consider how best to promote a growth mindset in your context.

For example, pupils need to be **resourceful** and **resilient** in the face of difficulties to avoid displaying helplessness. Strategies like compiling and using a 'stuck board' can be useful. These provide support so that pupils "know what to do when they don't know what to do" (*Piaget*).

Using others as a resource for learning (being **reciprocal**), for example by encouraging think-pair-share, talk-partners, peer assessment and group work, supports a growth mindset through sharing ideas and considering alternative ways of approaching learning tasks.

Building in time for pupils to be **reflective** through self-assessment and self-evaluation encourages them to know their strengths and to think of different ways to improve their learning. They can acknowledge what worked well for them and identify how they can move forward in their learning.



See the 'Be Resourceful', 'Be Reflective', 'Be Resilient' and 'Be Reciprocal' posters (Resource 8)

The type of praise we give can influence a pupil's mindset.

If you don't believe in your capacity to improve, why would you respond to feedback?

"Person praise may be well intentioned, but it can divert children from learning goals and lead to self-denigration and helpless reaction in the face of difficulty."  
*Dweck*

## Giving different types of praise

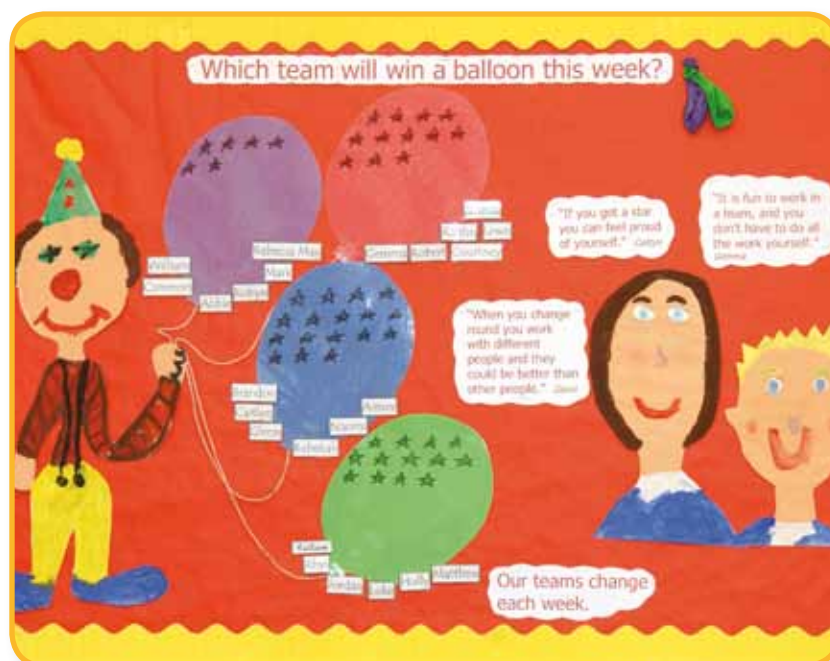
If you give feedback by **praising ability** – such as 'You are a very clever girl' – you are actually reinforcing a **fixed mindset**. Success will be seen as a measure of intelligence, and from the pupil's point of view it will be important to prove this intelligence to look good all the time. This person-centred type of praise is counter-productive, and there is much to lose. It can make pupils interpret difficulty or failure as personal weakness and fear that they might be exposed as lacking ability and not so clever after all.

On the other hand, **praising the process** the pupils have used, or the **effort** they have put in – for example 'You have used resources well' or 'You have worked really hard' – tends to foster a **growth mindset**. This kind of praise endorses positive beliefs about effort leading to success; it's not about the pupils proving themselves. Giving feedback on the effort pupils have put in or the strategies they've used in a task helps them to develop a more robust self-efficacy, believing that they can, with effort, achieve their goals.

## More to think about

Be aware of the differences between how the learners in your classroom interpret success and failure. For example, boys are more likely to attribute their success to ability and their failure to lack of effort (or just bad luck!). Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to believe that their success is due to effort and their failure to a lack of ability. When girls fail, their confidence can drop. This can lead them to avoid challenging tasks, feeling that their intelligence has been called into question.

Focus on ensuring that all pupils see challenge, effort and the use of strategies to help their learning as important ingredients for success. This is especially crucial at transition periods, when pupils can question their ability to cope in a different and potentially challenging environment.





## Finding good role models

Consider how you could incorporate the idea of positive role models into your classroom. These can be a powerful influence on learners. They might be people who have achieved success through a belief in themselves, or they might have used exceptional effort to cope with challenges and barriers in their lives. They could be famous personalities or people you meet every day. Good role models offer inspiration and support by what they say or do.



The teacher: valuing, influencing, informing, challenging, scaffolding ...



The talk partner: supporting learning

# Motivation

Explains why we think and behave the way we do ... it is more important than ability in determining success in life.



“Motivation is generated from the inside while being heavily influenced from the outside.”

*Alan McLean, 2006*

## What's this about?

Motivation comes from within. We are motivated by beliefs about ourselves, that is, by how we value ourselves in terms of our **self-concept**. This involves both self-worth ('I'm an OK person') and self-efficacy ('I can do this and I can improve'). Emotions motivate us, either in a positive, energising way or in a negative, energy draining way. Our emotions appraise situations and influence how we respond. While we can't motivate others, we can have significant influence on how they develop their self-concepts and respond to learning challenges.

If we want to nurture a positive emotional response to learning, we must help pupils to understand that their ability is changeable so that they adopt a 'self-improvement' rather than a 'prove myself' attitude. (See 'A Mindset for Learning' in Section 1.)



## Why it's important

How pupils perceive themselves and their abilities has a significant impact on their success. This includes both their attitude to failure and emotions, and their beliefs about self-directed learning.

## Failure and emotions

How pupils explain their success or failure is important, since what they attribute it to determines its impact on their motivation and learning. If, for instance, they attribute failure or difficulties to a lack of ability, then they believe that there is some irreparable defect within

them and they can 'retire hurt' (Black & Wiliam) without investing effort. Such a belief can have a negative impact on motivation and lead them to exhibit a helpless response:

- negative self-judgements;
- non-persistence;
- negative expectations; and
- negative emotions.

It makes sense, then, that the language we use and the type of feedback we give to pupils should focus on the task or their effort, not on the person (the ego). This means that when they are faced with failure or challenge, they are more likely to exhibit a confident, self-directed response.

### Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning involves:

- **self-management:** the ability to be organised, stay focused and control behaviour/actions within different contexts;
- **self-monitoring:** the process of reflecting, self-reviewing, evaluating and adjusting learning strategies; and
- **self-regulating:** the ability to control interest, attitude, behaviour and effort, to persist within a task or in pursuit of a goal.

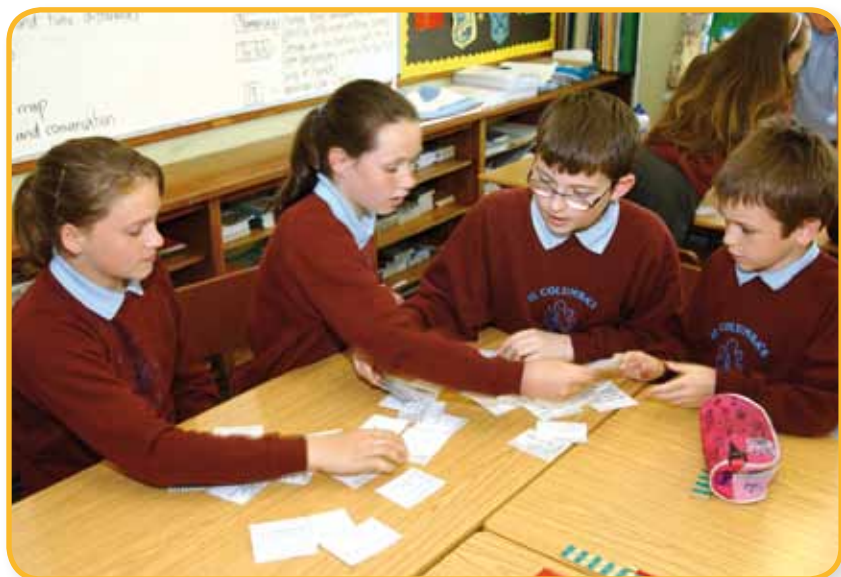
These skills and strategies are important because when pupils believe that they are in control of internal factors, such as effort or motivation, they are less likely to respond negatively to setbacks and challenges.

(See the *Overlapping Strategies of AfL and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities* table in Resource 1 as well as Resource 8: '4Rs Posters'. See also the self-management section of the *From-To Progress Maps*, which appears in Appendix 2 (page 35) of the *Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities* booklet contained in your school's *Curriculum Support and Implementation Box*).

"Motivation is the most important factor in determining whether you succeed in the long run ... motivation is not only the desire to achieve, but also the love of learning, the love of challenge and the ability to thrive on obstacles."  
*Dweck, 2006*

Intrinsic motivation is about wanting to achieve rather than having to.

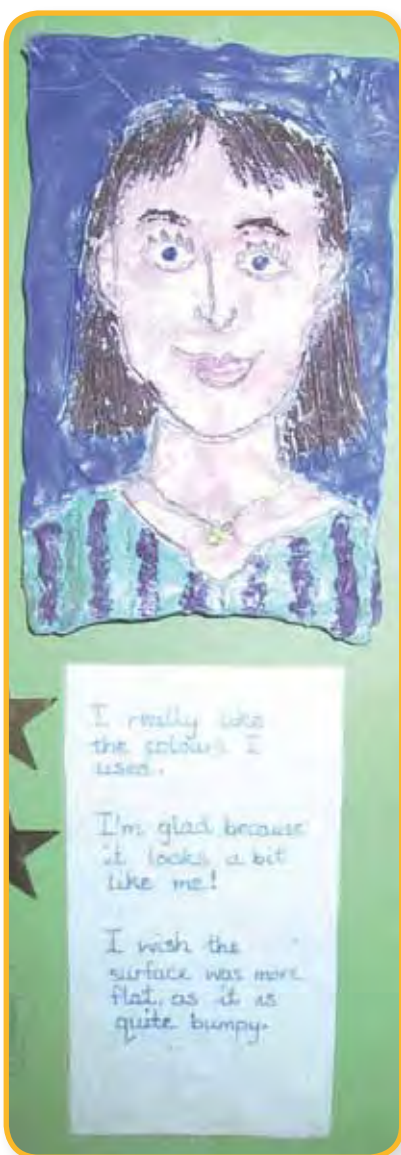
Self-directed learners are "responsible owners of their own learning process".  
*NWREL, 2004*



Motivation should be about learning for learning's sake, not for rewards or grades.

"Failure is one of the greatest arts in the world. One fails forward to success."

*Thomas Edison*



Self-efficacy is believing in yourself as a learner with capacity to improve.

## How to go about it

### Helping pupils to feel hopeful, not helpless

Keep in mind that pupils need to experience failure. Don't try to protect them from it, or they may avoid challenging learning tasks that could threaten the comfort of success. When they know that failure is normal and that they can cope with it, they are more likely to seek out experiences that will stretch their learning.

*"Effort is the key to achievement and self-esteem." (Dweck)*

### Creating a motivating climate

Work towards ensuring that your pupils' learning environment is a motivating one:

- Offer choice in what and how they learn.
- Help them understand that they are responsible for their own learning (see *Constructivism*).
- Let them know that getting into difficulty and making mistakes is normal in learning.
- Ensure that they have opportunities to experience challenge; learning shouldn't always seem comfortable or easy.
- Build in opportunities for pupils to reflect on their thinking and learning, either on their own or within a group.
- Link feedback to the success criteria, and celebrate pupils' effort and the learning they have achieved. This accepts and values their effort and progress.
- Place less emphasis on praise and rewards; these reinforce extrinsic motivation and can discourage risk taking for fear of failure. Praise the effort/task rather than the person/ego (see *A Mindset for Learning*).
- Model the behaviour and language you would like pupils to use. For example, help them to see how failure and mistakes can be learning opportunities. Encourage them to talk about what and how they are learning. Include discussion of highs and lows in their learning, especially what they enjoy and why.

### More to think about

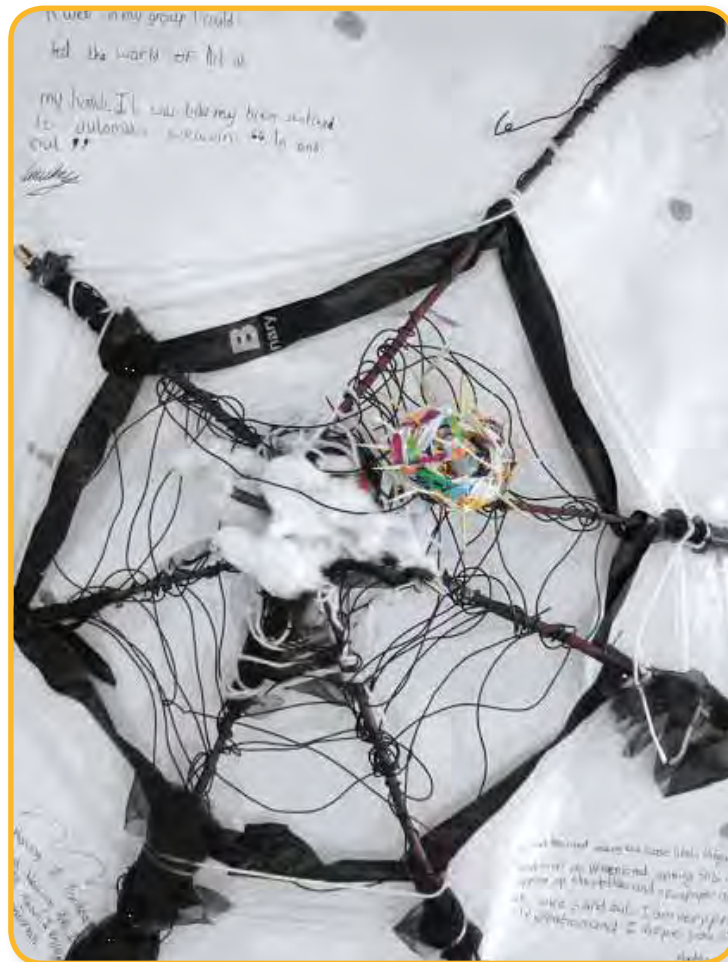
#### Motivation and the concept of 'flow'

*"the flow experience acts as a magnet for learning"*  
(Csikszentmihalyi, 2002)

Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow' metaphor describes how engaged we are in what we're doing. From the learner's perspective, the factors most likely to lead to flow are:

- clear learning intentions;
- feedback that helps us know how we're progressing;
- challenge that's sufficiently stretching;
- skills that are appropriate for the challenge; and
- lack of fear of failure.

Flow is a central feature of successful learning, reinforcing the desire and motivation to learn.



*When I was making a web in my group, I could feel the world of art at my hands. It was like my brain switched to automatic weaving ... 'in and out'.*  
Year 5 pupil

# Focus on Learning

Focusing on the learning, rather than the activity.



## What's this about?

Focus on learning involves making two essential elements very clear to pupils:

1. **the learning intention:** the new learning that pupils will get from the next stage in their learning programme; and
2. **success criteria:** those parts of the learning activity that are essential (in helping them to achieve the learning intention).

These two elements are usually made very salient and visually accessible throughout the lesson or series of lessons.

Making the learning focus clear, and scaffolding activity towards that learning, is something that all effective teachers do. However, it is often done orally, and there is evidence to suggest that making these vital elements visible throughout a lesson (or sequence of lessons) helps to focus pupils' attention on them more effectively.

Learning intentions tell pupils what they're going to learn.

Success criteria tell pupils what to pay most attention to in their activity in order to get the desired learning out of it.



It's about making the learning the key focus, instead of over-focusing on making the activity successful in our classrooms.

Share the learning – make it explicit.

Try to keep learning intentions and success criteria noticeable and accessible in the ways that best suit your context.

## Why it's important

If we are serious about helping pupils to become independent, we need to ensure that they know what they are meant to gain (in the form of new learning) from their learning activities. The addition of success criteria allows them to self-regulate successful activity. This lessens their reliance on the teacher, as well as providing criteria that both teacher and pupils can use later in assessment.

Making such information visually accessible ensures that all learners, not just those with good oral working memory, can remind themselves what the new learning is and what parts of the learning activity they should focus on in order to achieve it.

## How to go about it

You're probably doing much of what's involved already!

Independent learning = a clear learning intention, engagement, and plenty of scaffolding.

### Highlight the learning visually

Many teachers already use mindmaps to capture the highlights of learning. Many also use a learning board – sometimes called a 'WALT' (We Are Learning To...) board. These remind pupils of what they're learning and what to pay most attention to in their activity.



Remember, you can present learning intentions and success criteria in pictorial form as well as through text, or use a combination of both!

Learning intentions tell pupils what they're going to learn, not what they're going to do!

Post-primary teachers often provide copies of subject specifications to pupils pursuing GCSEs and other qualifications; these, when they are written in pupil-friendly language and presented in a more accessible format, provide clear signposts for clarifying important outcomes and improving pupils' performance.

### Learning intentions

When planning, take care to ensure that the learning intention tells pupils what they are going to *learn*. It is not uncommon, however, to find a description of the learning *activity* with the words 'We are learning to...' added. For example, 'We are learning to analyse the poem *Night Train*' was a learning intention that a teacher changed on reflection to 'We are learning to understand the power of metaphor'. The former was a description of the activity, the latter a description of the new learning focus that the teacher had chosen.

Keep in mind the value of transferable learning. Teachers often say that this reduces the amount of re-teaching they have to do, because pupils see the learning, rather than getting caught up in the context of the learning activity. This is not to say that all learning is transferable; there are many things that pupils need to know or be able to do that are highly specific to a single context. However, it is an important issue to consider when planning.

“In my classroom, sharing learning intentions and success criteria with the children makes them much more focused on the activity, and, as a result, their learning is much more evident. They are more responsive to questioning, and they make interesting comments throughout the lesson.”



## Planning for focus on learning

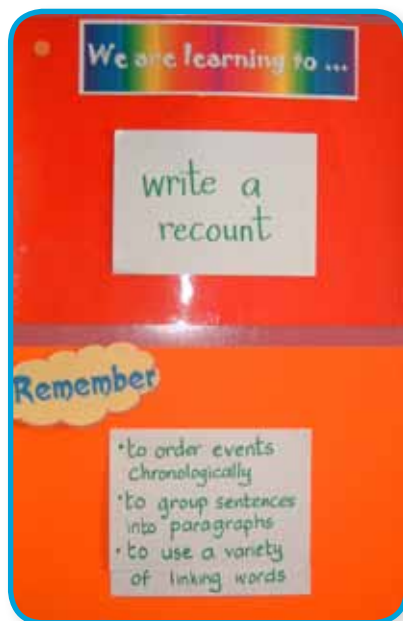
Many teachers say, ‘I don’t have the time to publish learning intentions and success criteria for every lesson!’ – and they are, of course, absolutely correct. Learning intentions should describe *new* learning, and they are most useful when they describe really significant new learning.

In **Foundation Stage** settings, it is likely to be a once per week occurrence, with intentions frequently centring on ‘big learning’ such as ‘sharing’, ‘working together’ and ‘good listening’. For example:

Foundation Stage	
Learning Intention	Success Criteria
We are learning to listen to each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at the person who is speaking.</li> <li>• Don’t do anything else while they are speaking.</li> <li>• Think about what they are saying.</li> </ul>

In this setting, it can be useful to represent these visually.

In the **primary** classroom, you may wish to develop learning intentions and success criteria twice a week with pupils, or more often if the learning merits it, particularly if pupils are learning something new.



Primary	
Learning Intention	Success Criteria
We are learning to write a persuasive argument.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State the reason for your writing.</li> <li>• Express your point-of-view.</li> <li>• Use paragraphs.</li> <li>• Use facts to back up your argument.</li> <li>• Use emotive language.</li> </ul>

It is difficult to give such a rule of thumb in **post-primary** classrooms. There, the frequency of use depends heavily on the nature of the subject and the amount of new learning present at any one time. It is important, however, to be *selective*. Keep in mind that the most important (or the most difficult) new concepts or skills being taught are the most appropriate ones to publish formally as learning intentions. That way, pupils won’t feel swamped by them. The rule, above all, is to make learning both manageable and beneficial for learners and teachers. For example:

Post-Primary	
Learning Intention	Success Criteria
We are learning how to draw a line graph.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw the axes.</li> <li>• Decide the biggest amount needed on both axes.</li> <li>• Work out the intervals needed on both axes.</li> <li>• Plot the points, and join them accurately.</li> </ul>



It's important to get the timing of success criteria right.

Pupils know what they are aiming for and take responsibility for achieving personal targets.

Success criteria help pupils know what 'good' looks like.

"Successful learning and teaching is our game,  
No hands up, thinking time, talking partners is our aim!  
Learning intentions, success criteria, help us do our best, No put downs, no wrongs even if you have guessed!"



## Success criteria

When you use success criteria, think about when in the lesson to introduce them for best effect. This usually involves discussing them:

- *immediately* before commencing the learning activity;
- after teaching the new concepts and/or skills; and
- after briefing the children about the activity.

Initially, you will have to provide the pupils with success criteria, explicitly modelling how you generate them. This should be a temporary phase, however, as it is important to involve the pupils in generating their own success criteria before they start an activity. This is because they can more effectively access criteria that they've generated themselves, and often with greater commitment too. It's also a useful way for you to determine that they are ready for the activity; it shows that they've understood the essential points from the teaching input that has preceded the learning activity.

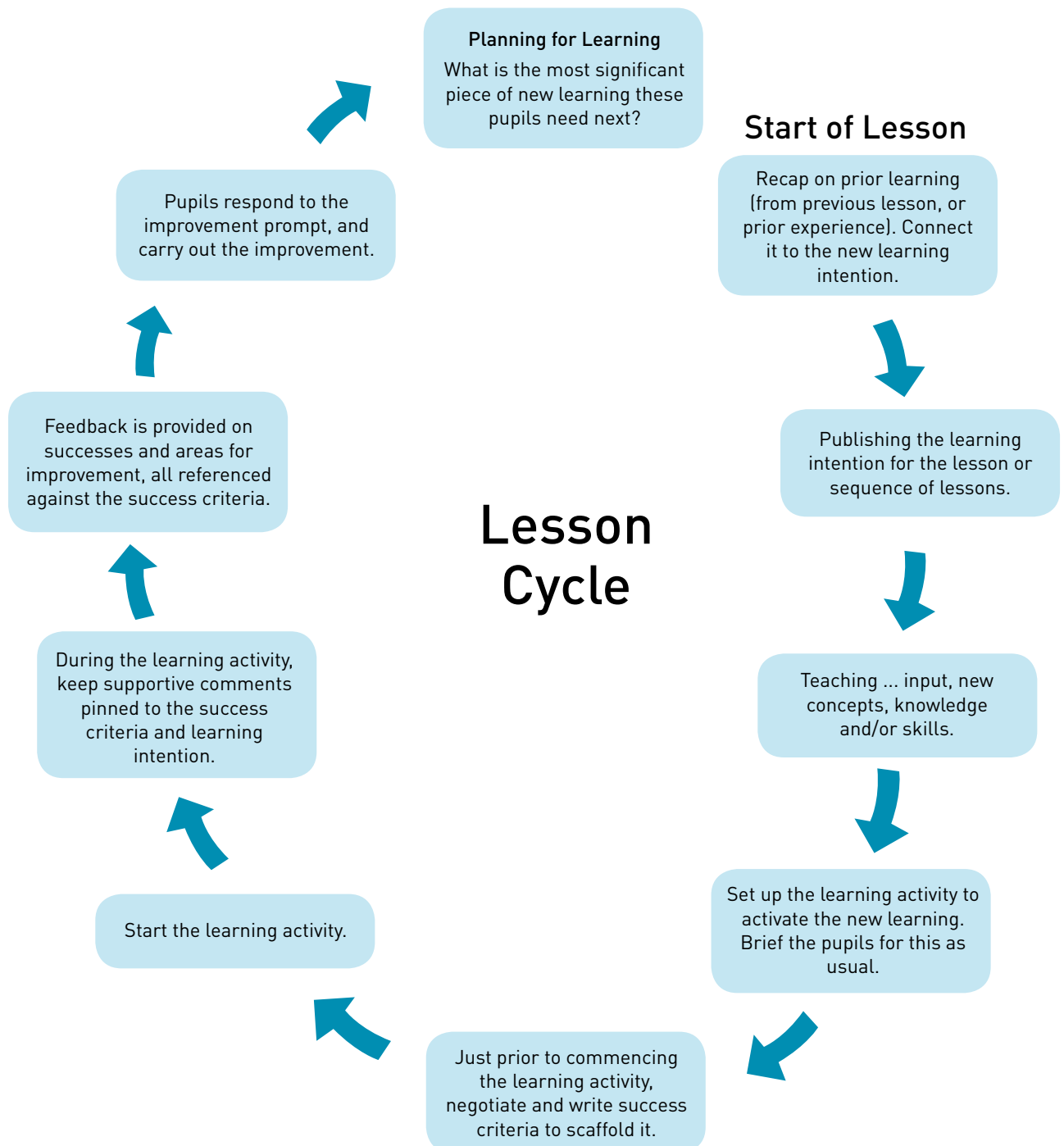


## More to think about

How do learning intentions and success criteria fit in to a lesson? There can be no fixed model because there is no such thing as a standard lesson sequence. The various phases depend on:

- the nature of the learning;
- the age of the pupils; and
- the stage that they have reached in their learning.

The lesson cycle shown is offered purely as an example of a sequence that many teachers may find familiar.



# Effective Questioning

Good questioning causes thinking.

*(Dylan Wiliam)*



## What's this about?

Many teachers feel uneasy about questioning as a teaching strategy: 'Why do only three or four pupils answer my questions?' 'Do I really have the time to ask questions?' 'Will there be behaviour management issues when I ask questions to the class, especially if there are long silences while I wait for hands to go up?'

## Why it's important

Researchers like Ted Wragg and Paul Black have identified the importance of effective questioning strategies in advancing pupils' learning.

It is common to find that the most productive questioning normally only comes about when we are working one to one with individual pupils – but how can we bring this richness to our work with groups and classes? Most educationists are aware of the potential of high quality questioning to deepen learners' understanding of new concepts; we just need to find ways to tap into it.

There are two big issues that effective questioning strategies help us to address:

- How can we extend participation in whole class and group questioning to all pupils?
- How can we develop questioning strategies that deepen pupils' learning?



## How to go about it

### Make questioning more focused

Stop using the rhetorical questions often used to manage behaviour, such as 'Is everyone sitting down yet?' or 'Has everyone brought their homework?' These are frequently used to soften instructions, but they really teach pupils to ignore many of our questions. Deliver courteous instructions instead, such as 'Sit down now please, everyone.'

## Ask fewer questions

Avoid using questions to bridge transitions in lessons when their only real purpose is to fill time or re-establish your presence. Ask yourself, 'Would the pupils be any worse off if I didn't ask this question?' You might be surprised how many times this stops you asking it!

## Raise the quality of your questioning

Consider the purpose of your questions. If you want to know what the pupils' knowledge is, ask a closed question (a question with one right answer). However, if you want to probe their understanding, ask an open question (one that prompts pupils to keep talking, like 'What more can you tell me?' or 'What do you mean by...?').

Think about staging your questions. Some teachers use closed questions first to put pupils into a context for thinking. Then they use open questions to probe and deepen the pupils' understanding in that context. For example, they might ask 'When was Mount St Helen's last major eruption?' followed by 'In what ways was that eruption similar to the 79AD eruption of Vesuvius?'

Think ahead, and be clear about the purpose of questioning. What are the pupils meant to be getting out of the next question?

## Give pupils time to think

This is often called 'wait time' or 'thinking time'. Although in some ways this strategy aims to enhance the quality of answers rather than questions, increasing pupils' thinking time also gives you an opportunity to ask different kinds of questions.

Research suggests that teachers typically restrict their 'wait time' to 1–3 seconds. The problem is that this only really gives pupils time to recall old learning, not to construct new learning. Allowing around five seconds of wait time means that you can ask more probing questions.

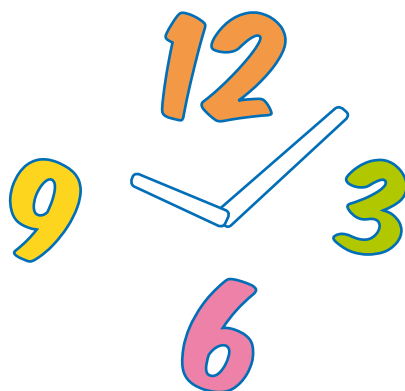
## Avoid 'shotgun' questioning

Ask questions one at a time, rather than firing off a barrage of them in quick succession. Remember that a proportion of pupils may suffer from slow speech processing, which means that it takes them longer to make sense of what we say. Barrages of questions may persuade them to tune out.

## Use 'no hands up'

This is a great way to extend participation to the whole class during questioning, rather than having the same few pupils answer most or all of your questions. Pupils do not indicate that they have an answer; instead, you choose somebody to provide one. This prevents the tendency for some pupils to stop thinking when others' hands go up! Be selective about when to use 'no hands up', however, to ensure that it builds on your current practice rather than replacing it.

Give your pupils time to think, often called 'wait time' or 'thinking time'.



"The wait time is so obvious – we just wonder why we rushed children so much to give us an answer."





## More to think about

### Encourage pupil questioning

It can be very productive to have pupils ask and respond to each other's questions. One very useful tip is to focus their attention on how 'juicy' their questions are. This is just a pupil-friendly way of describing open questions: 'juicier' questions are those with answers that kick-start further discussion rather than closing it down. You could begin by asking the pupils to consider some of your questions.

This is valuable preparation for encouraging pupils to generate questions for the rest of the class. It means that they are better prepared to design questions that keep discussion going, rather than 'quiz' type questions that focus on recall of simple facts.

# Formative Feedback

Good feedback helps pupils move forward in their learning.



## What's this about?

Feedback was the starting point for Dylan Wiliam and Paul Black's research into formative assessment. Since the central tenet of formative assessment is that assessment can improve learning, the nature and quality of feedback is crucial.

Teachers can spend a lot of time marking pupils' work, but the reality is that this can have little effect on improving their learning. Often, marks or comments on work tell pupils about success or failure but not about how to move on in their learning.

Feedback is more effective if it is focused on the learning intentions and success criteria of the task. This helps pupils understand the causes of their success or failure and become more aware of what counts as quality in their learning. Quality feedback involves giving them time to talk about and reflect on their learning and how it might be improved. Peer and self-assessment, as well as teacher assessment, contribute to formative feedback.

For feedback to improve learning, pupils need to know three things:

- where they are in their learning;
- where they need to go (their next steps); and
- how to get there (what improvements they can make).

Suggestions for improvement should enable pupils to 'close the gap' by taking their learning forward. Feedback is formative when they have time to reflect on and respond to these improvement prompts. Crucially, they need to take responsibility for their own learning and its improvement. We can't do it for them!

## Why it's important

Feedback can have a positive or negative impact on pupils' learning. Good quality feedback can significantly raise both pupils' self-esteem and their performance. The way they feel about themselves as learners is learned, and teachers need to be aware of the powerful messages they may be sending through feedback, whether verbal, non-verbal or written. Effective feedback is specific to the pupil (rather than comparative) and is descriptive (rather than evaluative). The first thing a pupil should do when given feedback is to think, not react emotionally.

An AfL culture embraces the notion that everyone can have areas for improvement, even the best. With its emphasis on effort rather than ability, supportive feedback builds self-confidence and sends a clear message to pupils that everyone can improve.

To ensure shared understanding among teachers, Resource 2 offers general guidelines for a school feedback policy.

Suggestions for improvement should scaffold rather than tell pupils what to do to improve. They should offer clear guidance on how work can be improved, the next steps in learning and how pupils can take them.

Feedback should focus attention on what needs to be done to improve.

"Just as we use the term "formative" to describe the experiences that shape us as we grow up, a formative assessment is one that shapes learning."  
*Dylan Wiliam, 2006*

Formative feedback focuses on success and improvement, not just measuring performance.



## How to go about it

### Applying formative feedback

- Ensure that your pupils know the criteria for feedback as they engage in the learning task.
- Give feedback that is accurate and realistic by focusing on the learning intentions and success criteria.
- Use effective questioning, discussion and prompts to focus on how the learning can be improved.
- Model the process of giving feedback, and help pupils develop the skills and approaches to do it themselves.

### Structuring quality feedback

Use the following four steps to help structure your feedback. This process is often referred to as two stars and a wish.

1. **Highlight success:** find two or three successes referring to the learning intention or success criteria.
2. **Identify an area for improvement:** find something that could be improved (not always the worst part!).
3. **Give an improvement suggestion:** write a prompt that will help the learner make the improvement. Bear in mind that three levels of prompt can be used:
  - Reminder:** reminding the pupils of the learning intention/success criteria;
  - Scaffold:** giving examples of what they *could* do or asking focused questions; and
  - Example:** giving the pupil concrete examples or suggestions that they can use.
4. **Give time:** give the pupil an opportunity to read the improvement and make the changes.

The vast majority of formative assessment is informal, with interactive and timely feedback and response.

Marking with improvement prompts.

“I started quality marking with just one group of children at a time. I’m now in the way of writing prompts, and children are getting used to feedback from their talk partner, so it doesn’t take so long.”





## More to think about

To make providing formative feedback manageable, do not begin by focusing on every piece of work produced by every pupil. Instead, start by structuring your feedback in this way for one group of pupils. Then focus on other groups in turn to ensure that they all receive feedback over a month or so.

This kind of 'quality' marking is not the only marking approach! Remember that different types of feedback can be appropriate for different purposes, including:

- oral feedback;
- acknowledgement marking (dated, signed);
- ticking right or wrong;
- 'quality' marking by the teacher, with 'closing the gap' prompts to move the learning on; and
- 'quality' marking by the pupil or pupils (reflection time).

Pupils should know what counts as good work – they need to have a nose for quality!

While reflection time (where pupils self-assess or work with a partner or small group to give and receive feedback) can be very effective, these skills need to be modelled and rehearsed. When using peer assessment, make sure that partnerships are appropriate and will offer support to one another.

## Avoiding unhelpful feedback

Feedback is unhelpful and can reinforce failure when it is:

- too kind;
- too vague;
- too critical;
- too excessive; or
- too late.

## Timing is important

Providing only end-point feedback may come too late, leaving little opportunity for the pupil to make improvements. Think about giving feedback while the work is in progress.



**See Section 1: 'A Mindset for Learning' for information on using praise.**



# Scaffolding Reflection

Scaffolding reflection is about building in time for pupils to recognise what and how they are learning and to make changes as they go along.



Scaffolding reflection is about building in time for pupils to recognise what and how they are learning and to make changes as they go along.

## What's this about?

Reflection helps us recognise what and how we have learned and what we need to focus on in the future.

Scaffolding reflection in the classroom involves helping pupils to develop and use the skills of:

- **peer and self-assessment** – reflecting on *what* they've learned; and
- **self-evaluation** – reflecting on *how* they've learned it.

This is about valuing and encouraging pupils' involvement in making judgements about their own and others' learning. The process of and language for reflection should be modelled by the teacher, and pupils should come to view it as part of their learning experience. Pupils need to have opportunities to discuss their learning, to share their understanding and to see mistakes as learning opportunities.



Gallery session – reflecting and responding as the learning is happening.

## Why it's important

By scaffolding learning through reflection, teachers ensure that pupils develop thoughtful approaches to their learning. They take more responsibility and become more focused, motivated and self-directed. They become more aware of their own skills, capabilities, strengths and weaknesses, and they realise that others have them too. They know what strategies work best for them and can apply these in different contexts. Reflection benefits both pupils and teachers.

“Engaging in peer and self-assessment is much more than just checking for errors or weaknesses.”  
*Black & Wiliam: Working Inside the Black Box, 2002*

Through group and peer assessment, pupils become teaching and learning resources for one another.

“Good learners are flexible. They watch how they are going and change things as they go along.”  
*Guy Claxton, 2005*

Pupils:

- develop a deeper understanding of what and how they are learning; and
- become more confident in their belief that their learning can be improved.

Teachers:

- gain insights into pupils’ learning; and
- can be more focused in their support since they do not have to give feedback to everyone all of the time.



## Peer and self-assessment

Pupils need to have basic information about what they are learning and how it will be assessed. To ensure their reflection is focused, the learning intentions and success criteria need to be accessible. In this way, pupils become more confident in identifying successes and areas for improvement in their learning. Pupils should be involved in peer assessment before they practise self-assessment.

Peer assessment helps by:

- motivating pupils to work more carefully;
- creating deeper understanding as they use the success criteria in both giving and receiving feedback; and
- giving them opportunities to communicate in language they would use naturally and understand.

Assessing one another’s work enables pupils to build up the skills and confidence needed for effective self-assessment.

## Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation:

- helps pupils become more aware of and improve their learning strategies; and
- can lead to improved outcomes due to its emphasis on thinking and talking about success and improvement.

Teacher modelling and working with peers help develop the quality of pupils’ dialogue and ability to talk about their learning. These collaborative processes encourage them to make insightful judgements about their own learning – how and why they’ve been





successful and how they could improve. They can also pick up ideas from others about how they might approach a task or problem. (See the 'Be Reciprocal' poster in Resource 8).

Pupils use self-evaluation to develop a better awareness of themselves as thinkers and learners. As they are prompted to reflect, they are making connections and taking stock of their learning processes. Knowing themselves as learners helps them become more versatile and resourceful as they meet new challenges.

## How to go about it

You can incorporate reflection:

- **at the beginning of learning** – to connect new learning and to elicit what pupils already know or can already do (*using KWL: Know, Want to know, Learned*);
- **during learning** – to ensure that pupils stay focused and make improvements as they go along (*ongoing plenaries using self, peer or teacher feedback*); and/or
- **after the learning** – to make pupils aware of successes and areas for improvement and to inform their learning targets (*thinking about what and how they have learned, and giving, receiving and responding to feedback*).

Asking themselves 'What did I do well and why?' helps pupils understand success and how they can improve.

"I found that in plenary sessions, my pupils were able to clarify uncertainties with me. It gave a forum for expressing difficulties, and their confidence has been enhanced. They know that their understanding is valued."



## More to think about

You can make subtle but significant changes by using a range of approaches to encourage reflection. These include:

- allowing 'wait time' after asking questions;
- allowing 'wait time' after questions have been answered;
- using processing strategies, for example 'Take two minutes to write three things you remember about...';
- discouraging 'hands up' (since this can distract thinking);
- promoting 'think-pair-share' time;
- offering prompts to initiate reflection;
- building in time to reflect before, during and after learning;
- displaying pupils' learning targets;
- encouraging the use of a learning log or diary;
- having an end-of-week review; and
- using strategies such as 'thumbs-up', traffic lights or smiley faces.

## Traffic Light Reflection

Got it



Not sure



Need more help



See the 'Be Reflective' poster (Resource 8)

# Planning & Monitoring Development in AfL



Planning for development, monitoring for effectiveness.

## What's this about?

Development in AfL is not unlike development in any other major school-based initiative. It proceeds along three main stages:

- **Initiation Stage – *Let's have a go***

It makes a lot of sense to allow teachers to begin by trying out strategies in one AfL element of practice rather than trying to introduce strategies across all of them at once. It also makes sense to limit initial exposure to the practice to once per week. This can be managed in primary schools by choosing one area of learning and at the post-primary level by choosing one teaching group. Don't be in too much of a hurry to move on!

- **Consolidation Stage – *It's actually starting to make sense***

At this stage, teachers identify benefits to pupil learning and usually begin to think about the next steps in development. This might mean moving on to another element of AfL practice or increasing the frequency of use by incorporating it into more areas of learning or teaching groups.

- **Embedding Stage – *It's just the way we do things here***

In three years' time, or so, all staff in your school may have experience of using strategies in all four elements of AfL practice and have selected those that work best for them and their pupils. At the embedding stage, decision-making about which strategies work best in different contexts becomes second nature, and clear improvements are associated with the practice.

Initiating. Consolidating.  
Embedding.

## Why it's important

Without proper planning for classroom implementation, it's very easy to reduce AfL to a range of fairly superficial classroom 'tricks' with very little impact other than on teachers' time in planning and preparation.

## How to go about it

### Refer to your *Curriculum Support Implementation Box*

This box of materials provided to your school in 2007 includes guidance on how to plan for AfL (and all other new areas of the curriculum) using the 4As model: Aspire, Audit, Adapt and Action.

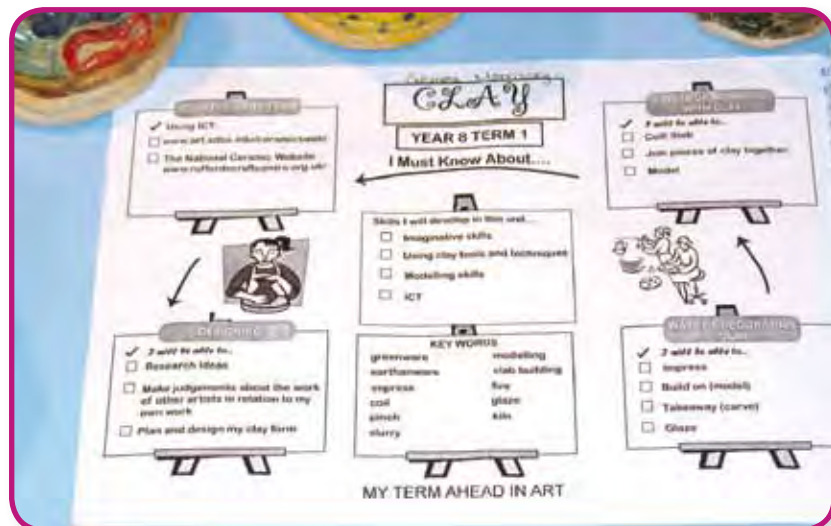
## Think long-term

It's vital to take a long-term view of development, probably around three years in the initial phase, and to invest time in getting the core values and principles discussed and shared. Ruth Leitch's (ref Resource 6) Northern Ireland based research into pupil voice, strongly suggests the importance of building a strong educational rationale for AfL in the minds of teachers, rather than requiring them to jump through the hoops of classroom practice without such preparation.

For the purpose of development planning in particular, it's important to develop a long-term view of how AfL strategies will be phased into practice over time. The tables on pages 40 and 41 show the kinds of strategies that teachers typically implement as they develop their practice over the initiation, consolidation and embedding stages.

Note that the progression described on the table is not fixed in any way – you may find things proceed differently. Use the table only as a general guide.

Take a long-term view of AfL development – at least three years.



## Know the elements well

For the purposes of **development planning, action planning and monitoring**, it's important to be clear about the four elements of classroom practice within AfL:

- **Focusing on Learning** by sharing learning intentions and success criteria with pupils (telling them what they're going to learn, and how to be successful in the learning activity);
- **Using Effective Questioning** that deepens pupils' learning and extends participation to all;
- **Providing Formative Feedback** that is focused more on the 'next step for improvement' rather than simply telling them how well they performed; and
- **Scaffolding Reflection** by developing pupils' skills in peer and self-assessment and self-evaluation to help them become assessors of their own and each other's work through their use of quality criteria and feedback skills.

## Pace yourself

AfL practice is most effective when the introduction of new strategies in the classroom progresses slowly. This benefits both the teacher and the pupil. Rather than try out all four elements of practice, choose one area at a time to develop.



## Choose a starting point

If you start by sharing learning intentions and success criteria with pupils, this will set the foundation for later effective use of success criteria, such as formative feedback and peer and self-assessment and self-evaluation.

## More to think about

If your school is under a lot of pressure from a current development plan, an alternative 'lighter' start is in the area of effective questioning strategies. This requires less preparation yet still provides clearly observable benefits to pupils' learning. In fact, questioning strategies can be brought into the train of development at any point.

Elements of AfL Practice	Developmental Stages		
<p><b>Focus on Learning</b></p> <p>Sharing Learning Intentions and Success Criteria with pupils</p> <p><b>Effective Questioning</b> to deepen learning</p>	<p><b>1. INITIATION</b> The 'Let's have a go' stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning intentions that describe learning rather than activity are planned.</li> <li>• Learning intentions/success criteria are published, perhaps via WALT or Learning Board, or are written into workbooks.</li> <li>• Good learning intentions/success criteria are modelled to pupils.</li> <li>• Introduction of learning intentions/success criteria is started with one subject/one teaching group.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The point of questions is considered – what do you want to get from each one?</li> <li>• The risk of closed questions is lowered.</li> <li>• Wait time is pushed to 3-5 seconds.</li> <li>• 'No hands up' is tried for <i>some</i> questions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. CONSOLIDATION</b> The 'It's starting to make sense' stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning intentions are reviewed for transfer.</li> <li>• Success criteria are developed by negotiation with pupils.</li> <li>• Learning intentions/success criteria are reviewed with Key Stages/Dept ... notes are made for possible amendments in Schemes of Work.</li> <li>• Thumbs up/traffic lighting are used by pupils, indicating confidence.</li> <li>• Plenary review against learning intentions/success criteria are conducted.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait time – skills are taught to pupils to use it well.</li> <li>• Pupils are scaffolded into asking their own questions.</li> <li>• Game show elements are used to build pupils' questioning. strategies...for example 'Ask the audience'.</li> <li>• Response partners (talking partners) are set up for answering questions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. EMBEDDING</b> The 'It's just the way we do things here' stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schemes of Work are reviewed in chosen areas of learning.</li> <li>• Writing transferable learning intentions becomes intuitive.</li> <li>• Outcomes of formative assessment are used to inform planning.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Response partners are changed frequently – anyone can work with anyone else.</li> <li>• Pupils are asking questions across the class.</li> <li>• Pupils are aware of 'Juicy Questions' – those that prompt further questions rather than just providing an answer.</li> </ul>

Elements of AfL Practice	Developmental Stages		
	<p><b>1. INITIATION</b> The 'Let's have a go' stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comment-only feedback is provided.</li> <li>• Feedback systems are explored for preference, for example bubble and box, highlighting, annotation.</li> <li>• Increased emphasis is placed on 'feed forward' (prompt for the next improvement) rather than just judging performance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. CONSOLIDATION</b> The 'It's starting to make sense' stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement prompts are differentiated to reflect pupils' ability.</li> <li>• Pupils are self-assessing using success criteria prior to teacher feedback.</li> <li>• Pupils are identifying own strengths, perhaps one, then both, with teacher quality assuring these.</li> <li>• Pupils are beginning to reflect on their teacher's feedback.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. EMBEDDING</b> The 'It's just the way we do things here' stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils are identifying successes and improvement area, with teacher quality assuring.</li> <li>• Pupils are identifying improvement prompts, with teacher quality assuring.</li> <li>• Pupils are identifying everything, with teacher quality assuring.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Formative Feedback</b> focused on a pupil's 'next step' improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-assessment is driven by plenary review against success criteria.</li> <li>• Self-evaluation is driven by plenary review using 'big questions'.</li> <li>• Other structured forms of plenary review are used to prompt pupils' reflection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements are noted in pupils' self-esteem, particularly lower performing pupils.</li> <li>• Improvements are noted in pupils' confidence to attack tasks, particularly low performing pupils.</li> <li>• Pupils are far more focused, not only on the task, but the learning intention too.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-assessment takes the form of giving feedback to oneself.</li> <li>• Pupils are reflecting on how they personally learn best.</li> <li>• Individual target-setting occurs over half-term/term cycle with reviews.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scaffolding Reflection</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements are noted in pupils' self-esteem, particularly lower performing pupils.</li> <li>• Improvements are noted in pupils' confidence to attack tasks, particularly low performing pupils.</li> <li>• Pupils are far more focused, not only on the task, but the learning intention too.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anonymous peer assessment, using success criteria, is derived from anonymous peer analysis.</li> <li>• Peer assessment on each other takes place using shared success criteria.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastery orientation emerges – pupils feel they 'can do'.</li> <li>• Performance is enhanced, perhaps most particularly among low-end of performance range, but all perform better against historical baseline.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Peer and self-assessment/ self-evaluation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements are noted in pupils' resilience, particularly low and high performing pupils.</li> <li>• Increased independence of pupils develops – scaffolding approaches are used in the classroom to support them when they don't know what to do.</li> <li>• A stronger focus is placed on enabling learning, rather than controlling it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements are noted in pupils' resilience, particularly low and high performing pupils.</li> <li>• Increased independence of pupils develops – scaffolding approaches are used in the classroom to support them when they don't know what to do.</li> <li>• A stronger focus is placed on enabling learning, rather than controlling it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements are noted in pupils' resilience, particularly low and high performing pupils.</li> <li>• Increased independence of pupils develops – scaffolding approaches are used in the classroom to support them when they don't know what to do.</li> <li>• A stronger focus is placed on enabling learning, rather than controlling it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Effects observed on mindset and climate in classrooms</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements are noted in pupils' resilience, particularly low and high performing pupils.</li> <li>• Increased independence of pupils develops – scaffolding approaches are used in the classroom to support them when they don't know what to do.</li> <li>• A stronger focus is placed on enabling learning, rather than controlling it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements are noted in pupils' resilience, particularly low and high performing pupils.</li> <li>• Increased independence of pupils develops – scaffolding approaches are used in the classroom to support them when they don't know what to do.</li> <li>• A stronger focus is placed on enabling learning, rather than controlling it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements are noted in pupils' resilience, particularly low and high performing pupils.</li> <li>• Increased independence of pupils develops – scaffolding approaches are used in the classroom to support them when they don't know what to do.</li> <li>• A stronger focus is placed on enabling learning, rather than controlling it.</li> </ul>



# Providing Information to Parents



...developing the partnership between home and school.

## What's this about?

One of the things that makes a big impression on many parents is the range of teachers' feedback that they see in their children's books and homework. If formative, comment only feedback is going to be used effectively, it is important to consider and anticipate parents' reactions. It may be well worth the time invested in helping them to understand why comment only feedback is beneficial to their children's learning.

## Why it's important

- Parents' attitudes to learning and assessment have a great impact on those of their children.
- Parents have a right as partners in their children's education to know about changes to the Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- Parents are much more likely to react positively to changes in feedback and assessment arrangements in schools if they are informed about and understand the educational rationale behind them.
- Parents will be in a much better position to help their children to use feedback effectively if they understand how it works. This is particularly important in a feedback approach that is focused on prompting next steps improvements that require the child's motivation and resilience.
- Parents will be better able to interpret and make good use of the information provided in their child's Annual Report if they are acquainted with a formative approach to assessment. This is likely to make communication between teachers and parents much more effective and mutually beneficial.

## How to go about it

Your school will be aware of the best way to communicate effectively with your parents, whether through newsletters, curriculum workshops, parents' meetings, regular informal discussions or during normal consultation meetings with teachers.

However, Resource 3 contains a set of questions and answers that you can use to discuss communication strategies. Amend these to suit your own needs and your school's ethos.

# Impact on Learning

Comments from the Northern Ireland  
AfL Action Research Project



## Background

Throughout the AfL Action Research Project, teachers were asked to reflect on the impact of their AfL practices. Individual ELB support officers led workshops and discussion forums that included a range of activities designed to:

- encourage the teachers to explore their own thinking;
- discuss successful strategies developed in other schools;
- reflect on findings from research;
- help the teachers plan their own approaches; and
- enable the teachers evaluate their own progress.

Regional celebration and dissemination events provided teachers from Cohorts 1–3 with the opportunity to share ideas, experiences and practice and to showcase evidence of the impact in their schools. Primary and post-primary teachers shared stories of their experiences implementing AfL, reflecting on:

- what worked for them;
- the challenges they experienced in developing their own practice; and
- in what ways the strategies they tried made a positive impact on learning and teaching.



Representatives from the wider educational community also participated in these events to add to discussion, learn from schools' experiences and to see examples of AfL in practice (as evidenced in the displays of teachers' resources and pupils' work).

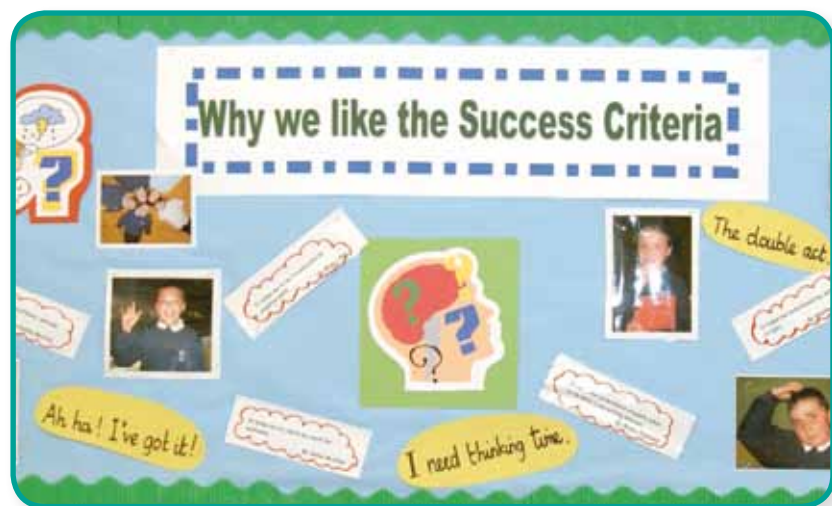
Teachers completed questionnaires, articulating their views and ideas and the comments made by pupils. These comments have been structured/clustered under the four elements of AfL practice:

- Focus on Learning
- Effective Questioning
- Formative Feedback
- Scaffolding Reflection.

## Comments

The following is a sample of comments from participants across all Key Stages. They offer advice to teachers and describe the impact the four elements of AfL practice had on:

- pupils' self-esteem;
- pupils' self-confidence;
- pupils' understanding;
- pupils' ability to talk about their learning and how to improve;
- teacher–pupil relationships;
- how they teach; and
- revealing new insights about ways to improve their current practice.



## Focus on Learning

### Views of Teachers



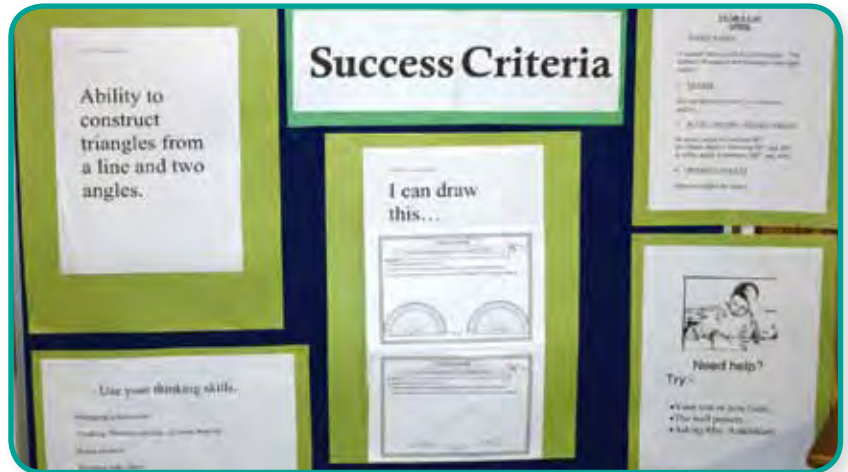
“I thought it would be impossible to share learning intentions and success criteria with P1 children, but I used photographs instead of writing and it's worked a treat.”

“The visual timetable is very useful for providing the children with a broad outline of the day in advance. It is particularly helpful for those children who fall into the category of the autistic spectrum.”

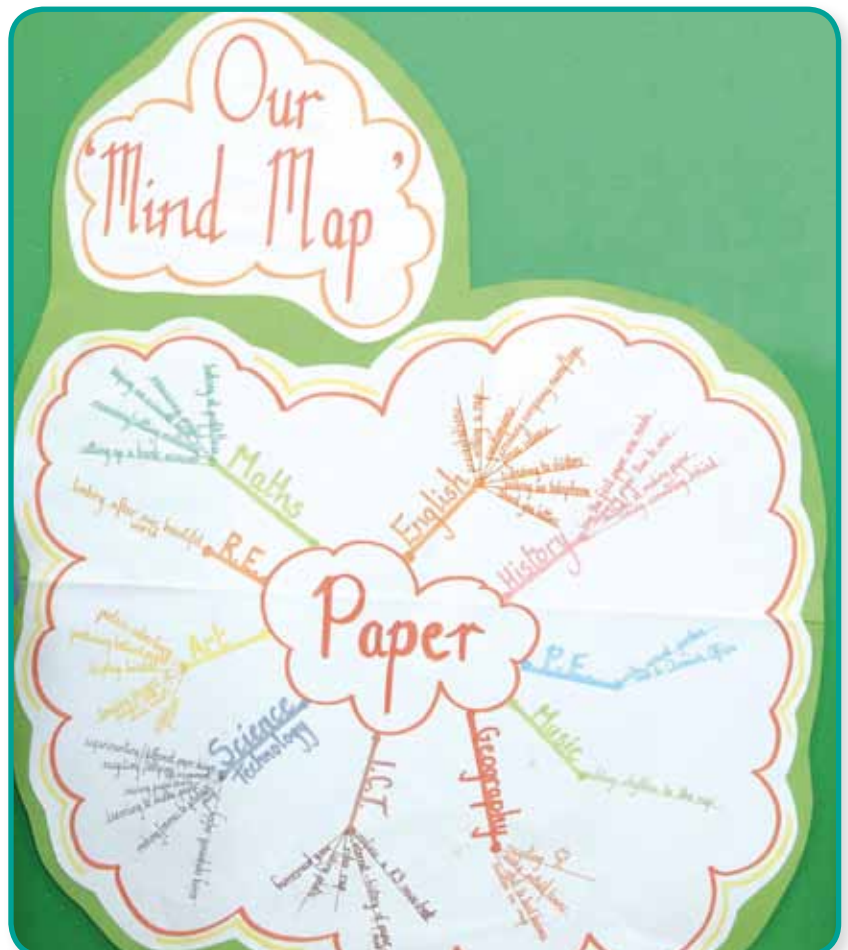
“Little techniques like using coloured pens to bubble round the learning in their books help the children to focus.”

“Once I encouraged the children to contribute to the success criteria, this made the process more meaningful, as the pupils had ownership of what they were being asked to do.”

“Success criteria are compiled as a class using the pupils’ own language. They see the point of what they are doing, and because they have been developed by them, they focus on them throughout the project.”



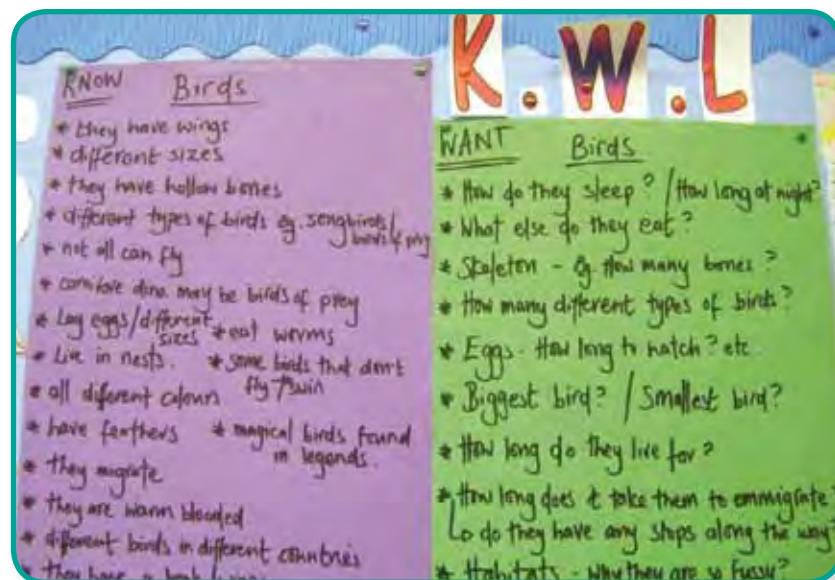
“I decided to use mind mapping as a tool, as I wanted to use a method that would offer some pictorial representation as well as key facts. I needed my GCSE pupils to recognise how the syllabus theory content fitted together as part of a jigsaw. I used it as a teaching tool to enable them to learn how to learn as well as for making notes. The method is also useful for assisting memory recall.”



“Clear instructions are set out relating to classwork and homework. Pupils play a crucial part in negotiating their own success criteria and they are aware of what they are being marked on. All the work is looked at together and pupils enjoy suggesting how improvements could be made.”

“Teachers in our school have said sharing learning intentions with children has made them reflect even more on the learning intentions in their planning. We have learned that children are capable of a greater level of understanding of their learning than we would give credit for, and for a lot of children it has unlocked the mystery that only the teacher knows what they should know!”

“It’s important to realise that you can’t effectively utilise success criteria and the two stars and a wish approach if you try it with every lesson. Time is too constrained. Concentrate on one lesson a week to start with and do it really well, so that it is meaningful to you and your pupils, before gradually increasing its use.”



“I loved the idea of “sharing the secret” with the children and telling them what they are going to learn so that they can succeed, rather than vaguely expressing it and assuming and hoping that they can do the work.”

“Ask one pupil to write up the learning intention – this helps the class to settle and to focus on learning at the start of each lesson. This has worked particularly well with a difficult post-primary class, who were always very easily distracted. Get pupils to come up with the success criteria – when they do this, they automatically break up the task and visualise it.”

“In my SEN class, I have introduced a WALT board and used IEPs to produce focused plans. Clear learning intentions are shared at the beginning of the session, and I’ve worked to provide clearer success criteria, with some input from the children. I’ve displayed visual icons and referred to these during regulated learning. In addition, I’ve differentiated activities to match learning intentions to match learning intentions and now plan brain breaks. I also now conduct focused plenaries.”



## Views of Pupils

**“The remember board is brilliant. I never get lost in my learning anymore and hardly ever forget to do things – most of the time!”**

*10-year-old*

**“It really helps me know what to do.”**

*7-year-old*

**“It points you in the right direction.”**

*10-year-old*

**“It helps you set your goals.”**

*9-year-old*



## Effective Questioning

### Views of Teachers

“When asking more open-ended questions, we found that fewer questions are better because that allows time to seek better answers, for example: ‘Can you tell me more?’ ‘Can you think of another reason?’”

“Pupils seem more at ease with coming up with answers and explanations to my questions and are taking more time to think things through. They have become more settled, have a more mature approach and will ask good strong questions.”

“When I used no-hands-up, I could actually see the young children trying to think! There was also more of an awareness of body language, eye contact, tone of voice and focus of attention between me and the pupils.”

“All answers are used to develop understanding. The aim is thoughtful improvement, rather than getting it right first time. When all children are addressed, one child’s self-esteem is not affected.”



“A change to my questioning habits had an immediate effect on the answers. Wait time and “millionaire” style questions had a positive effect and included more of the class who would have sat back and not tried to answer.”

“Planning is a key factor in good questioning. The teacher must model effective questioning in order to get effective questioners.”

“Everyone in school is very positive about the strategies adopted for effective questioning. The children like to have time to think, and they also like the opportunity to share their ideas with someone else before sharing them with the whole class. This encourages everyone in class to be involved and boosts confidence.”



## Views of Pupils

“Everyone was putting their hands up and I felt left out. I felt I was slow.”  
9-year-old

“We have think time – it's good if you're stuck. It lets you have peace to think about it.”  
8-year-old

“It's ok if the answer isn't always right. That's how we learn.”  
10-year-old

“No-one rushes you.”  
6-year-old

“It helps me think better.”  
8-year-old

“I liked ‘Wait Time’ because it took the dumbstruck feeling off you when you didn't know the answer.”  
Year 8 pupil

“I liked ‘Wait Time’ because it gave me a chance to talk my answer through instead of making a fool of myself if I got the answer wrong.”  
Year 8 pupil



## Formative Feedback

### Views of Teachers

"I've always marked with the principal or parents or the inspectorate in mind – now I'm marking for the children!"

"I have made an effort to get away from a 'grade culture' and move to a comment type feedback, but I find that pupils still ask 'but what grade is that?' Gradually the pupils and I are looking more towards 'how can this be improved?' but it is a challenge to change the grade mindset."

"I have found that formative assessment has helped my pupils to become more confident with what they can do. Knowing that this is the area where I will offer the most support has made it acceptable and comfortable for them to admit areas of weakness/areas they need help with. It has encouraged positive two way communication between me and the pupils in my class."

"Giving feedback has become more of a discussion between me and the pupils, and we refer back to what is on the board. When the children can't understand a task, it is much easier to help them by focusing them on the board and what I'm looking for. They have noticed that even the brightest girl in the class has 'wishes' in her book."

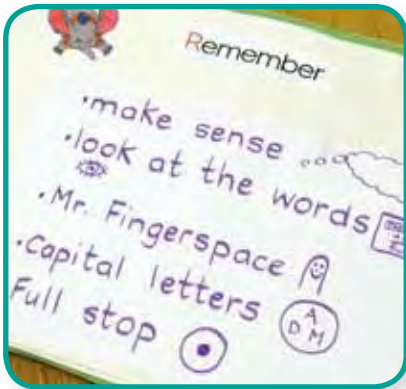


"Although I was already writing comments, providing a scaffolding comment made me think carefully about the individual child and his or her specific area for improvement (differentiation)."

"The children need plenty of oral feedback/improvement prompts. Written comments about pupils' writing are not always accessible or as effective in Primary 2 and 3."

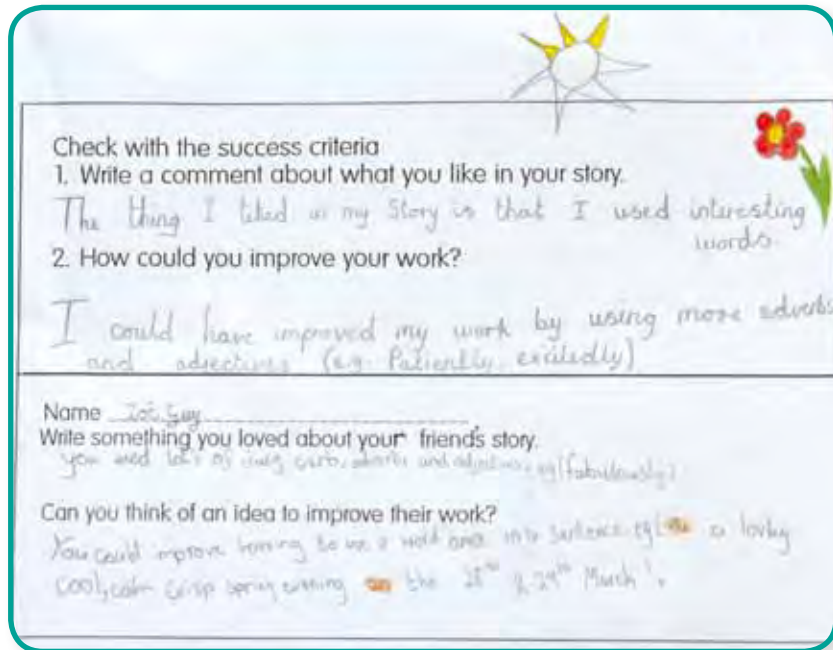
"It has made a massive improvement to the weaker children. They don't compare themselves with others anymore by discussing grades; they realise that they can be artists! When an improvement such as "greater depth of shading" is written as a prompt on one homework, then this improvement is readily transferred to the next piece of art work. They readily make the transfer... I don't think I'll ever go back to the marks ever!"





“By using two stars and a wish, the children are now more interested in reading the comments and understanding how they can make [their work] better. They pay more attention to the comments that they can read, and they like to make the improvements. Almost immediately they liked the “no more marks” (approach) and the “everybody is the same – you can improve yourself” (ethos).”

“I struggled with writing comments on hundreds of art homeworks every week! I believe in the impact of formative feedback because I have seen the improvement that it has made to the quality of art work in my classroom and to the children’s belief in themselves.”



“In my SEN class, I give oral feedback while pupils engage in a task. Feedback is instant and accessible, as these children cannot read comments. They assess their own work, with support, using visual success criteria. They are also involved in “learning talk”, such as “What have you done well?” One success is circled, and areas for improvement are identified. I provide waiting time for processing, and all achievements are recognised.”

“We recognised the need to educate parents so that [when they see their child’s work] they [understand] the focus for the marking. For example, a good idea is to write the learning intention at the top of the piece of work so that the parent can see the focus for the learning/ marking.”



## Views of Pupils

“It really helps me to see what I’ve done well and how I can make it better next time.”  
Year 5 pupil

“I like talking about my work with my talk partner. You can share each other’s ideas.”  
8-year-old

“I love hearing what everyone thinks about my work.”  
Year 5 pupil

“It really helps me see what I’ve done well and how I can make it better next time.”  
9-year-old



## Scaffolding Reflection

### Views of Teachers

"I use plenaries halfway through the lesson. We go back to the success criteria, and my pupils think about how well they're doing."

"Gallery sessions in art are really useful, and the children really enjoy and learn from them."

"I get the children to think about how well they've worked together, and I use questions like 'What really made you think?'"

"The pupils in my Year 10 class have been engaging in self-assessment [and self-evaluation] by asking:

- What three things do I really understand about this topic?
- What am I not sure of?
- What questions would I need to ask to help me understand it better?"

"This has helped my pupils to focus not only on what they have learned, but also how they are learning. It has also helped me as a teacher to assess my teaching."



"Self-evaluation has promoted reflection in my classes. I encourage my pupils to think about:

- What did I find difficult in that class?
- Do I understand it now?
- How did I figure it out?"

"Being involved in the process of self-assessment has enabled a shift in responsibility in my classroom from teacher to pupils. They have a better understanding of the intended learning, of what needs to be done to improve their work and why it needs to be improved. This has encouraged a process of ongoing self-assessment, which has led to more detailed, mature end products."

“We were already using a series of faces to evaluate how they felt about activities, so this was something already in place to build upon.”

“My Year 6/7 class can now draw up collaborative success criteria and use these to assess each other’s work using the two stars and a wish approach. This peer-evaluation has worked very successfully in Literacy. The next challenge will be to develop their skills of self-assessment and self-evaluation.”

“The children are more involved in taking responsibility for their own learning through self-assessment aids such as traffic lights and through critiquing each other’s work with response partners.”



## Views of Pupils

“I think using the coloured traffic light cards to let the teacher know if you understand everything is a good idea because if you are embarrassed and don’t want to say you are confused, you can just flip your card to red.”

*Year 8 pupil*

“Traffic lights help me tell the teacher about my learning.”

*7-year-old*

“We use two stars and a wish for our weekly targets. It really helps me think about what I’ve enjoyed and what I’d like to do better.”

*10-year-old*

“We explain to each other how we get an answer. Harry’s method is very clever and quick.”

*11-year-old*





## The Final Word from Teachers

"The children in our school have discovered that if something makes you think, you are learning something new."

"Using the AfL strategies has had a definite impact on the children's motivation, enjoyment and ability to focus on the task. Despite teething problems and the time needed, the benefits to pupils far outweigh the difficulties."

"At the start it was difficult to let go and to let the children take control – I was afraid that if another teacher walked past and the class was talking, he/she might think that the class was not on task. But letting go can be very interesting. Often the children come up with things I would never have thought of."

"I feel that I am focusing more on what I want my Year 5 children to learn rather than on what I want them to do. They feel more secure in their interaction with me, and there is a reduced fear of giving the "wrong" answer."

"I felt that all the children, especially the less able, were more focused on working out an answer and engaged in active learning. The pace of the lesson was slowed down. There was less quantity but certainly more quality teaching."

"Overall, I feel the children have become more focused in their learning. I have particularly found this to be the case with those children with special needs. They can refer back to the WALT board to check their work, and this has greatly benefited them."

"Children don't worry about where they are at if they are aware that they are getting better. As a school, we have learned to accept where we are with our pupils and value the progress that children make related to their own past performance."

"Assessment for Learning has meant a change in my thinking as a teacher. Initially, I found it a bit daunting, but I have found it has benefited my understanding of creating a positive learning environment where everyone is encouraged to have a go. Successes are discussed but also failures."

"It's been challenging for me to reflect on my own teaching and see my 'faults' regarding meeting the needs of the pupils. Often driven by time, I find we are afraid to take a step back and see how things can be achieved in a different way."

"Try out one of the strategies for a few lessons, take feedback from your pupils and record your own feelings about what you have tried. Then move on to another strategy. I personally feel that Assessment for Learning really gets to the core of successful learning and teaching, and my teaching has benefited from introducing it."

"Assessment for Learning has given me the opportunity to try out new ideas and evaluate their effectiveness. It has helped me to refocus my own teaching strategies and so has helped me improve on the quality of learning and teaching within my department."

"For me, the highlight of using AfL is that it opens up a new area of worthwhile communication between teacher and child."

"The children's minds are focused on what they are learning, especially during play-based learning, when we pause between activities and ask 'Can anyone tell me something new they've learned?'"

"The person who has learned the most is **ME!** I have been enlightened as to how I can encourage children to take ownership for their own learning."

"I have found that leaving out statements such as "Aren't you clever?" and replacing them with "You are learning a lot today!" has indirectly changed how the children approach learning."

"I feel confident that there is a learning culture in my classroom rather than a doing culture. There is a lot less 'busy' work."

## Final Word from Principals

“Building up learning intentions, success criteria and peer-evaluation has been a very gradual process. It takes time to build the procedures and ethos of Assessment for Learning.”

“Allow teachers time to embed each new approach in their classroom practice before introducing anything more. It’s easy to fall into the trap of thinking you’re doing Assessment for Learning if you do a crash course in it. But taking small steps means you are more likely to be effective in improving the children’s learning.”

“Action research the strategies – get the staff together, agree to try out a particular aspect over a certain period of time, carry it out in class, gather evidence to reflect on the practice, observe each other and come back at a future meeting to share problems, ideas and good practice, and to agree the next steps forward.”

“Our school organised a celebration day with posters and pupils’ work. Staff response was very positive. All agreed that they had benefited from the sharing of good practice.”

## References and further reading

Black, P. & Wiliam, D. *Working Beyond the Black Box*. 2000.

Black, P., Harrison, C., Lee, C., Marshall, B. and Wiliam, D. *Assessment for Learning: Putting it into Practice* (paperback). Open University Press: 1 September 2003. ISBN: 978-0335212972.

Clarke, S. *Enriching Feedback in the Primary Classroom*. Hodder Murray: 2003. ISBN: 978-0340872581.

Clarke, S. *Formative Assessment in Action: Weaving the Elements Together*. Hodder Arnold: 2005. ISBN: 978-0340907825.

Clarke, S. *Formative Assessment in the Secondary Classroom*. Hodder Murray: 2005. ISBN: 978-0340887660.

Chambers, M., Claxton, G. and Gornall, S. *Building Learning Power in Action*. TLO Bristol: 2002. ISBN: 978-1901219517.

Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning (CPAL): [www.cpal.qub.ac.uk](http://www.cpal.qub.ac.uk)

Csikszentmihalyi, M. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimum Experience* Harper Collins: 1990. ISBN: 978-0060162535.

Dweck, C. *Self Theories: Their Role in Motivation, Personality, and Development*. Psychology Press: 2002. ISBN: 978-1841690247.

Gardner, J. *Assessment and Learning*. Sage Publications Ltd: 2006. ISBN: 978-1412910514.

Gilbert, I. *Essential Motivation in the Classroom* (paperback, 1st ed). Routledge: 2002. ISBN: 978-0415266192

McLean, A. *The Motivated School*. Paul Chapman Educational Publishing: 2003. ISBN: 978-0761943853.

NWREL Website (North West Regional Educational Laboratory): [www.nwrel.org](http://www.nwrel.org)

Perkins, D. *Smart Schools, Better Thinking and Learning for Every Child*. Allyn & Bacon, 1st Free Press: 1996. ISBN: 978-0205195541.

Wragg, E. C. and Brown G. *Questioning in the Primary School*. Routledge Falmer: 2001. ISBN: 978-0415249515.

Wragg, E. C., Brown, G. *Questioning in the Secondary School*. Routledge Falmer: 2001. ISBN: 978-0415249522.

# Resources

## Resource 1

### Overlapping Strategies of AfL and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities (TSPC)

AfL Strategies	TSPC Strategies
<p><b>Focus on Learning</b> <b>Scaffolding Reflection</b></p>	<p><b>Making thinking important</b> <b>Making thinking explicit</b></p>
<p>These classroom strategies require a commitment to giving pupils time to talk about and reflect on their thinking and learning.</p> <p>They are about having a classroom environment that promotes thinking and reflection, for example through displays such as learning boards or stuck boards.</p> <p>They help pupils to understand the purpose of their learning and know the criteria for its assessment in advance.</p> <p>Reflection helps them develop a deeper awareness of themselves as learners.</p>	
<p><b>Scaffolding Reflection</b></p>	<p><b>Making connections</b> <b>Promoting independent learning</b></p>
<p>These classroom strategies emphasise the importance of providing opportunities for transfer of thinking and learning.</p> <p>They are about pupils being able to make connections, applying what they know and what works for them as they engage in different tasks. Using self-assessment and self-evaluation to develop awareness of their personal strengths helps them become more self-directed.</p> <p>They show greater independence through their ability to monitor their own learning and set goals for improvement.</p>	
<p><b>Scaffolding Reflection</b> <b>Formative Feedback</b></p>	<p><b>Enabling collaborative learning</b></p>
<p>These classroom strategies are about recognising the social nature of learning – that we learn with, from and through interacting with others.</p> <p>Collaborative learning provides opportunities for the sharing of knowledge and skills. Maximising the potential of collaborative learning has implications for classroom layout and the organisation of learning activities. In terms of moving learning forward, peer feedback benefits both the giver and the recipient. It also contributes to pupils' confidence in giving and receiving praise and criticism.</p>	
<p><b>Effective Questioning</b></p>	<p><b>Effective questioning</b> <b>Setting open-ended challenges</b></p>
<p>These classroom strategies require a focus on the purpose and quality of both questioning and challenge.</p> <p>These are not just about checking knowledge/understanding. They are about encouraging children to think in different ways, for example to elaborate/justify/explain in order to deepen and extend their thinking and learning. It is important to consider why and how we ask questions and to build them into lesson planning.</p> <p>Open-ended questions and challenges give pupils the opportunity to respond creatively and to construct their own meaning rather than being instructed to advance learning.</p>	

## Resource 2 General Guidelines for a Feedback Policy

It is important for teachers to have a shared understanding of, and a consistent approach to, the provision of feedback. The following is a suggested framework of sub-headings and examples of some of the language which might be used within this process. The text in the right hand column is for exemplification only, and isn't intended as a specimen of what all schools should include in a feedback policy.

Rationale	At this school, we believe that marking is about responding appropriately to pupils' work. Some of this is found in books and on presented work, but much of pupils' practical work, and their learning experiences, results in <i>verbal</i> feedback. It is, therefore, important to focus on feedback as a whole, rather than on written annotations and comments only.
Purposes	Feedback to pupils should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aid their future learning;</li> <li>• indicate areas of success in pupils' work;</li> <li>• indicate areas for future improvement;</li> <li>• scaffold pupils' efforts towards such improvement; and</li> <li>• help inform parents of their child's progress.</li> </ul>
Principles	Feedback should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be carried out regularly;</li> <li>• be carried out as soon as possible after the completion of a task/activity;</li> <li>• be, on balance, a positive expression towards the pupil;</li> <li>• relate to the learning intention for the activity;</li> <li>• inform future planning for learning intentions and learning activities; and</li> <li>• be accessible to the pupil.</li> </ul>
Good practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils should collaborate with you to develop success criteria, which you then use to scaffold the learning activity and to guide feedback.</li> <li>• Provide 'comment only' feedback, where two successes and one improvement are identified and expressed in the feedback for an activity, whether written or verbal.</li> <li>• Pupils use success criteria to scaffold their own self-assessment.</li> <li>• Pupils are given time to read feedback and respond to it.</li> </ul>
Monitoring	School leadership team/curriculum leaders should review written feedback and monitor samples of books (perhaps each term), looking at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarity of comments (language used and legibility);</li> <li>• appropriateness of improvement prompts; and</li> <li>• pupils' responses in the form of improvements made.</li> </ul>
Agreed Procedures	For feedback, your school could include a range of comments pertaining to colours used, forms of annotation, and possibly some area of learning/subject guidance in this section of the policy. There may also be comments geared to particular year groups and key stages for developmental appropriateness.



## Resource 3

### Outline Structure for Parents' Advice Literature

The following suggests information you may want to include in AfL-related guidance to parents. It is not intended to be issued to parents verbatim; rather, it suggests key topics to share and should be amended to suit your school's needs.

#### What is Assessment for Learning all about?

It all boils down to teachers and pupils using very clear information to do three important things to help pupils make progress in learning:

- establishing where pupils are in their learning;
- deciding what they should be aiming for next; and
- identifying a precise route to get them there.

So, it's not a new approach at all, as teachers and learners have of course always tried to do these things. It's more a reworking of the most successful existing practices into a very systematic framework that helps both teachers and pupils to better manage progress in learning.

#### Why is there a need to change the way assessment is done in schools?

The change is merely using what is already known to work most effectively to bring about improvements in learning. All of the practices under the banner of Assessment for Learning are simply tried and tested ways of helping pupils to make the best possible progress.

#### Is it only some, or all, schools that are involved in this?

All schools will be working to the three principles. This is because Assessment for Learning is an important part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

#### What will teachers be doing that's different?

They may not be doing anything different, as they could very well be using some or all of the strategies already. There are four broad areas of practice that teachers use to help pupils to make best progress:

- ensuring that pupils know exactly what they are meant to be learning and how to be successful in their learning activities;
- providing feedback to pupils that identifies their successes and areas for their next improvements;
- using questioning strategies that involve more pupils and that lead to deeper learning; and
- helping pupils to assess themselves, so they are less dependent on others to tell them how successful they are. This is a key skill for life.

#### Does this mean that current approaches will be thrown out?

Certainly not. Assessment for Learning strategies are already current. The objective is to spread the best practice around in a systematic way.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of assessment:

- the kind that measures past progress in learning; and
- the kind that indicates future targets for learning.

Assessment for Learning is heavily focussed on the second purpose, targeting a pupil's next steps in learning. Therefore, assessment approaches that are designed to measure past progress are far less affected by Assessment for Learning developments.

#### What are the benefits for pupils and their learning?

There are well-documented benefits reported here in Northern Ireland, including:

- increased self-esteem and confidence among pupils when solving problems;
- greater resilience and independence in the face of challenges;
- improvements in learning skills and performance; and
- an increasing ability to assess their own performance.

## **How will it affect pupils' future chances of success?**

There is much research that indicates several reasons for people not doing as well as they should at college, university or in their employment. These include:

- low self-esteem and confidence, leading them to avoid challenge;
- lack of resilience, leading them to give up when they encounter difficulty; and
- lack of ability to assess their own performance accurately, which means they underestimate or overestimate themselves.

Compare these with the benefits noted above, and you can easily see the potential Assessment for Learning has for influencing success.

## **How does this affect pupils' performance in external examinations like GCSE?**

Assessment for Learning approaches help pupils to be much clearer about what is expected of their performance at given levels, and this helps them to prepare for examinations with greater confidence.

## **How will it influence the quality of information that I will receive about my child's progress at school?**

The Annual Report will provide information that is organised according to Assessment for Learning principles. This simply means that you will be clearly informed about your child's past performance in each area of learning as well as their next steps for improving their future performance.

## **What can we do as parents to support these changes?**

You have a huge impact on your child's ability to learn – these are good messages to get across to your child:

- Everyone makes mistakes – it's okay as long as we learn from them. It's better to have a go than to avoid trying for fear of failure.
- Comments that suggest improvements are more useful to help your child than marks or grades. Help your child pay more attention to them!

## Resource 4

### Sample Parent Leaflet

#### INFORMATION FOR PARENTS ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

#### HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING?

- Talk to your child about what they are learning – your interest means a lot, even if it doesn't seem like it.
- Encourage your child to 'have a go', especially when they are uncertain. Praise and reward effort as much as you would performance or results.
- Read the comments on your child's work and talk to him/her about how they can use their comments to improve their work.
- Encourage your child to keep improving.
- When your child gets stuck, don't give him/her the answer; instead, encourage them to try different ways to become 'unstuck'.
- Encourage your child to ask questions.

#### WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Name of School

School Logo

Mission Statement

School address:  
Telephone:



## WHAT IS ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING?

Many think that assessment is all about tests and exams, grades, right and wrong, and pass and fail – and it can be. This type of assessment is usually called summative assessment, as it takes place after a period of learning. Its purpose is to see how well the pupil can perform using their new learning.

In contrast, Assessment for Learning, (sometimes called formative assessment), happens during the period of learning and helps the pupil to know:

- where they are in their learning;
- where they need to go next; and
- how to get there.

Assessment for Learning informs the process of learning as it is happening, rather than simply measuring its outcome afterwards.

In implementing the Northern Ireland Curriculum (2007), teachers across Northern Ireland will make use of Assessment for Learning to raise their pupils' achievement and to increase their motivation and confidence.



## HOW WILL IT HAPPEN?

We will:

- inform pupils about what they are going to learn and why it will be useful to them;
- share exactly how their work/learning will be assessed;
- use a comment-only marking strategy from time to time;
- mark their work by identifying areas of success and highlighting areas for improvement;
- encourage them to reflect on their own work, as well as the work of other children in their class, which builds and deepens their understanding of quality;
- use oral questioning in the classroom to stimulate their thinking and deepen their understanding;
- encourage them to 'have a go' by giving them more time to think of answers to oral questions;
- value all answers, because making mistakes is part of the normal learning process; and
- encourage them to be more resourceful and independent in their learning by equipping them with helpful strategies that they can use when they get stuck in their learning.

## WHEN WILL IT START?

It has already started! This practice is not new to teaching. Indeed, it has been in use for a long time. What is new is that Assessment for Learning has been formally recognised in Northern Ireland as a mode of assessment to enable children's learning.


However, we are not alone in this practice. Most of the world's education systems are adopting Assessment for Learning approaches because they are focused on improving pupils' learning and raising their achievement.

## Resource 5

### Raising Awareness PowerPoint

(See electronic file on website)


Slide 1



Northern Ireland Curriculum

## Assessment *for* Learning Raising Awareness

Slide 2




Northern Ireland Curriculum

Assessment for Learning  
Raising Awareness

## Assessment *of* Learning

- Often called summative assessment
- Takes place *after* the learning
- Focuses on pupils' achievements
- Is used to provide feedback to parents based on performance evidence

Slide 3




Northern Ireland Curriculum

Assessment for Learning  
Raising Awareness

## Assessment *for* Learning

- Often called formative assessment
- Takes place *during* the learning
- Makes pupils active participants in their learning and focuses on *next steps* in learning
- Feeds forward to manage improvements
- Fosters responsibility for & ownership of learning
- Establishes where they *are*, where they need to *go* and *how* to get there

## Slide 4




Assessment for Learning  
Raising Awareness

### The Assessment Balancing Act

- Both formative and summative assessment are important
- The Northern Ireland Curriculum seeks a better balance between the two

## Slide 5




Assessment for Learning  
Raising Awareness

### AfL in the Classroom

**It involves teachers teaching pupils:**

- what they are about to learn and why;
- how to be successful at attaining the new learning;
- how to understand quality criteria and use them to self-assess - a vital life skill; and
- how to ask, as well as answer, better questions to deepen their own learning.

## Slide 6




Assessment for Learning  
Raising Awareness

### Research Evidenced Impacts

**Teacher Outcomes**

- More focused on pupils' learning
- More concerned with the learning than activity or performance
- More reflective about own practice
- Greater control passed to pupils
- Changed relationship between teacher and pupil

## Slide 7



Assessment for Learning  
Raising Awareness

### Research Evidenced Impacts

**Pupil Outcomes**

- Raised self-esteem and increased confidence
- Greater resilience
- Improved tenacity and perseverance
- Acquired vocabulary for learning
- Changed relationship between teacher and pupil
- Improvements in performance, motivation, engagement, attainment and independence

## Resource 6

### Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning (CPAL)

CPAL was an in-depth, 18-month study conducted in Northern Ireland. Led by Ruth Leitch of Queen's University Belfast, the project examined pupil participation in their own assessment. This was done from a children's rights perspective, which was based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). It focused on Article 12, which defines a child's right to be heard. Below is a summary of the project:

#### Project Scope and Key Questions

- 1 **State/Country – Are pupils being systematically consulted?**
  - Are the channels of consultation child-friendly?
  - What types of responses do pupils receive to consultations?
- 2 **School Culture – Do we have a 'listening ethos'?**
  - Is there a gap between espoused ethos and pupils' experiences?
  - What processes/spaces are created for pupil consultation on learning, teaching and assessment?
- 3 **School Leadership – Is the whole school staff being supported to understand pupils' rights, the enhancement of their AfL skills and how we assess impact?**
- 4 **Classroom – How are teachers encouraging participation by pupils in their learning?**
  - Are pupils involved in evaluating lessons?
  - Is there evidence of increased use of peer and self-assessment and self-evaluation, negotiation of success criteria, etc?
- 5 **Pupil – In what way are pupils involved in negotiating success criteria, agreed learning intentions, assessment and practices in classrooms?**
  - How are pupils involved in assessing the impact of classroom teaching on their motivation, learning and progress?
- 6 **Parents– How well are we informing parents about new assessment practices and their children's roles in these?**

#### Main Research Results

- Pupils can be consulted directly by policy-makers on educational matters, including assessment, using appropriate child-centred consultation methods.
- Evidence shows that learning in an environment where their teacher's beliefs and practices about AfL are congruous benefits pupils educationally and increases their levels of understanding about their assessment.
- Teachers and parents are generally supportive of children's rights and of increasing participation in learning and assessment.
- Children can be involved collaboratively as co-researchers in ways that enhance the inquiry and enshrine children's rights.
- Opportunities for increased awareness on how to apply and evaluate children's rights in practice are necessary across the education system.

# Assessment for Learning (AfL) Overview

## Scaffolding Reflection



- ★ **Understanding:** Pupils develop deeper understanding through using success criteria in giving and receiving feedback.
- ★ **Collaboration:** Through group and peer assessment, pupils become teaching and learning resources for one another.
- ★ **Self-Knowledge:** Pupils develop a deeper awareness of the skills, capabilities and strategies that work best for them.
- ★ **Transfer:** Pupils recognise different contexts in which to use their learning.

## Focus on Learning



- ★ **Clarity:** Pupils know what they are meant to be learning.
- ★ **Focus:** Learning is made explicit because it is shared in a simple, unambiguous form.
- ★ **Quality:** Success criteria help pupils know what 'good' looks like.
- ★ **Targets:** Pupils know what they are aiming for and take responsibility for achieving personal targets.

### What's Behind It?

**Research and practice confirm that:**

It makes a significant difference to pupils' capacity for learning. Success can be achieved by putting in effort and using good learning strategies.

Pupils need to be actively engaged in thinking about, talking about and assessing their own learning.

A classroom culture that promotes a positive can-do mindset builds confidence and motivation in learning.

## Effective Questioning



- ★ **Purpose:** Clear, purposeful, open questions extend thinking and learning.
- ★ **Quality:** Good questioning strategies promote engagement and inclusion.
- ★ **Dialogue:** Thinking and enquiry can be enhanced through pupils asking questions of each other and building on each other's ideas.
- ★ **Response:** Pupils are more confident in giving an answer if they are given time and their responses are treated with respect.

## Formative Feedback



- ★ **Rationale:** Feedback is formative when pupils are given time to act on it.
- ★ **Transparency:** Pupils know the criteria for feedback as they engage in the learning task.
- ★ **Outcome:** Feedback is focused on success and improvement, not just measuring performance.
- ★ **Timing:** Feedback can advance learning throughout the task, not just at the end.



## Resource 8

### The 4Rs Posters

'Be Resourceful', 'Be Resilient', 'Be Reflective' and 'Be Reciprocal' describe what being a good learner means in practice.

The purpose of these posters is to support you as you help your pupils become better learners. Each provides prompts that you can discuss with your pupils to help them take responsibility for and regulate their own learning. They underpin the development of a 'can-do' positive mindset. By delving into the 4R learning skills, pupils know what they need to be doing in order to develop their learning abilities.

The 4R learning skills in these posters are adapted from the work of Professor Guy Claxton (*Building Learning Power*). They use the language of the skills and capabilities articulated within the Northern Ireland Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities framework, which was developed by Professor Carol McGuinness.

Being a good learner means enjoying learning, seeing yourself as a learner, seeking it out and knowing how to go about it.'  
*Guy Claxton, 2002*

#### Using the Posters

Each poster defines a learning skill by identifying its component parts and describing these parts in detail. It is by focusing on these parts that pupils can become more aware of what they can do to develop the learning skill. Used in a whole-school context, the 4R Posters can help you identify how pupils' learning abilities can be promoted throughout your school. The 4R learning skills are interrelated and you should make the connections between them explicit to your pupils.

For example, at transition times (moving to a new class or school), pupils' self-belief can be challenged, and they may feel they are unable to cope. Resilience is an important learning skill they need to carry with them, and one of its component parts is an ability to 'Stick with it'. Some of the suggested actions pupils can take to learn to 'Stick with it' are to:

- use strategies to get themselves unstuck;
- ask themselves what someone else would do; and
- tell themselves they'll be fine.

Each of these actions can be used as a focus (as in the sharing of learning intentions and success criteria), since they describe what pupils need to do to be successful in sticking with it. You should encourage your pupils to reflect, over a period of time and in a range of contexts, on how well they can 'stick with it', using the language of the suggested actions.

The posters should be seen as starting points to be added to and amended in discussion with staff/pupils. For instance, the language will need to be simplified for younger pupils, and the skills could be presented as bricks in a learning wall (see Resource 9).

**Note:** Full-size versions of these posters are located in your binder's pocket.

# Be Resourceful

## Use Your Imagination

Ask yourself:  
‘How, Why, What if ...’  
Look at things from different angles.  
Play with ideas and explore possibilities.  
Imagine what success in your learning looks like and feels like.

## Use Resources Well

Use what you already know.  
Seek help when you need it.  
Keep a note of really good sources of information.  
Locate and select appropriate sources of information.  
Notice how others do things and build on their ideas.

## Use Reasoning

Work things out step by step.  
Make informed judgements and decisions.  
Give reasons for your ideas, opinions and decisions.  
Notice weak or strong points in an argument.

## Ask Good Questions

Use different types of questions:  
What would happen if ...?  
How is this the same? different?  
What are the options?  
Can you explain that in another way?  
What evidence do you have?  
What made this successful?  
Why do you think that?

## Make Links

Look for connections between ideas, information and experiences.  
Make predictions based on what you think, feel or already know.  
Apply what you’ve learned and how you’ve learned in different contexts.

★ ★ Use a variety of learning strategies

# Be Resilient

## Stick with it

- Persist with challenges even when you hit a barrier.
- Tell yourself you'll be fine.
- Use a range of strategies to get yourself unstuck.
- Put in effort to achieve success.
- Consider if it's really worth putting in the effort.

## Enjoy Challenges

- Have a go, especially when it's difficult.
- Know if it's not challenging, it's not stretching your learning.
- React to mistakes and failure by trying harder and using different approaches.
- Seek out new ways of doing things.

## Manage Distraction

- Identify what helps and what gets in the way of your learning.
- Do what it takes to get yourself ready for learning.
- Use success criteria to keep yourself focused.
- Talk about what you're thinking or feeling when you're on task and when you're off task.

## Go with the Flow of Learning

- Talk about the highs and lows of learning.
- Talk about how it feels when you're really enjoying learning.
- Notice what keeps you motivated.
- Enjoy losing yourself in learning.

## Try Different Approaches

- Think about what worked before and why.
- Listen to and learn from others' ideas.
- Weigh up pros and cons.
- Stay open to new ideas and possibilities.
- Do you need to leave it and come back later?

Keep going no matter what

# Be Reflective

## Learn from Experience

Think about what helps you learn and why.  
Apply good learning strategies to future learning.  
Learn from mistakes and consider what you could do differently next time.  
Think about where else you could use what you've learnt.

## Learn from Others

Ask questions to find out what others think.  
Notice what others do to achieve success.  
Choose a good role model.  
Ask for and respond to feedback.

## Make Plans

Set goals and targets for what you want to achieve.  
Think about what and who you need to help you.  
Ask yourself: 'Have I been here before... what worked then... will it work again?'  
Develop step by step plans for tasks.

## Be Flexible

Follow your plans until they stop making sense.  
Stay open to useful suggestions.  
Make changes as you go along.  
Experiment with different ways of doing things.

## Keep on Course

Keep learning goals and targets in mind.  
Use success criteria to stay focused.  
Ask yourself from time to time: Is this OK?  
Is there a better course to follow now?

## Know yourself as a learner



# Be Reciprocal

## Listen Carefully

- Focus on what's being said.
- Show you're listening through eye contact and body language.
- Keep quiet when others are talking.
- As you listen to others, what are they making you think?
- Build on what others have said.

## Imitate Others

- Look and listen to pick up good habits.
- Ask yourself how someone else would think or act.
- Choose a role model for good reasons.
- Act as a good role model for others.

## Give and Take

- Work in different roles and take responsibility for tasks when working with others.
- Become aware of others' strengths (roles, skills, knowledge).
- Value and praise other's ideas and accept praise for your own.
- Give and respond to feedback.
- Give reasons when you agree or disagree with others.

## Show Empathy

- Be aware of your own feelings and how they affect what you think, say and do.
- Think about the feelings behind what someone is saying.
- Respect the views and opinions of others.
- Work towards reaching agreement and managing disagreements.

## Interact when you need to

- Have confidence in learning on your own.
- Know when it's better to work with others.
- Seek advice from others when you need it.
- Share your ideas and learn from others' ideas.

## Learn with and from others

## Resource 9

### Learning to Learn Wall (Foundation Stage)

Talk about what helps me to learn	Try different ways of doing things	Use what I've learned in different ways	Learn from what others say and do	Give suggestions to others
Talk about my learning	Use suggestions from others	Learn from my mistakes	Set targets and plan for how I can reach them	Use my time well
Keep going when it's difficult	Put in effort to improve	Talk about how I feel when I'm learning	Enjoy challenges	Keep focused on my learning
Enjoy learning new things	Learn from what worked before	Take risks in my learning	Ask good questions	See other ways of doing things
Ask for help when I need it	Find information and use it well	Give reasons for my ideas	Work things out step-by-step	Make links in my learning
Think about what I can do when I'm stuck	Build on what others have said	Pick up good habits from others	Share my ideas	Respect others' ideas
Be a good role model	Work with others when I need to	Know what I say and do will affect others	Say why when I agree or disagree	Work well in a group
Listen carefully				



Reflective



Resilient



Resourceful



Reciprocal



Talk about what  
helps me to learn



Try different ways  
of doing things





Use what I've learned  
in different ways



Learn from what  
others say and do



**Give suggestions  
to others**



Talk about my  
learning



Use suggestions  
from others



Learn from my  
mistakes



**Set targets and  
plan for how I can  
reach them**



Use my time well






Keep going even  
when it's difficult



**Put in effort  
to improve**



Talk about how I feel  
when I'm learning



Enjoy challenges



Keep focused  
on my learning



Enjoy learning  
new things



**Learn from what  
worked before**



Take risks in  
my learning





Ask good questions



See other ways  
of doing things



Ask for help when  
I need it



**Find information  
and use it well**



**Give reasons  
for my ideas**



**Work things out  
step-by-step**



**Make links in  
my learning**



**Think about what I  
can do when I'm stuck**





**Build on what  
others have said**



Pick up good habits  
from others



Share my ideas



**Respect others'  
ideas**



**Be a good role  
model**



Work with others  
when I need to



**Know that what I  
say and do will  
affect others**



**Say why when I  
agree or disagree**





**Work well in  
a group**



**Listen carefully**

# Acknowledgements

CCEA would like to thank everyone who assisted in the development of this resource. In particular, we would like to thank:

- the principals and teachers involved in the Northern Ireland AfL Action Research Project;
- the CASS officers for their commitment in supporting the schools throughout the action research process;
- Professor John Gardner, Queen's University Belfast, for his advice and guidance in assessment practices; and
- Dr Ruth Leitch, Queen's University Belfast, for her support and collaboration during her study: Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning (CPAL).

## **AfL ACTION RESEARCH SCHOOLS**

Acorn Integrated Primary School, Carrickfergus  
Alexander Dickson Primary School, Ballygowan  
All Saints Primary School, Ballymena  
Aquinas Grammar School, Belfast  
Ballee Primary School, Ballymena  
Ballinderry Primary School  
Blythefield Primary School, Belfast  
Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh, Belfast  
Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin, Belfast  
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste, Belfast  
Castledawson Primary School  
Cedar Lodge Special School, Belfast  
Clandeboye Primary School, Bangor  
Cookstown High School  
Currie Primary School, Belfast  
Donegall Road Primary School, Belfast  
Drumaghlin Primary School, Crossgar  
Edmund Rice Primary School, Belfast  
Fane Street Primary School, Belfast  
Forth River Primary School, Belfast  
Gaelscoil na bhFál, Belfast  
Glencraig Primary School, Holywood  
Greenwood Primary School, Belfast  
Harberton Special School, Belfast  
Harding Memorial Primary School, Belfast  
Hart Memorial Primary School, Portadown  
Hazelwood Primary School, Belfast  
Hezlett Primary School, Coleraine  
Holy Child Primary School, Belfast  
Holy Rosary Primary School, Belfast  
Holy Trinity Primary School, Enniskillen  
Kilkeel Primary School  
Killowen Primary School, Coleraine  
Knockbreda Primary School, Belfast

La Salle Boys' Secondary School, Belfast  
Loreto Convent Primary School, Omagh  
Malvern Primary School, Belfast  
Mercy Primary School, Belfast  
Millington Primary School, Portadown  
Newtownbreda High School, Belfast  
Orangefield High School, Belfast  
St Aidan's Christian Brothers Primary School, Belfast  
St Colm's High School, Dunmurry  
St Columb's Primary School, Desertmartin, Magherafelt  
St Columba's Primary School, Clady, Strabane  
St Conor's Primary School, Omagh  
St Joseph's Primary School, Antrim  
St Joseph's Primary School, Meigh, Newry  
St Kevin's Primary School, Belfast  
St Malachy's Primary School, Camlough, Newry  
St Mary's High School, Lurgan  
St Patrick's Primary School, Aghacommon  
St Patrick's Primary School, Holywood  
St Patrick's Primary School, Mayobridge  
St Patrick's Primary School, Newry  
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick  
St Bride's Primary School, Belfast  
St Gerard's Education Resource Centre, Belfast  
St Oliver Plunkett Primary School, Belfast  
St Peter's Primary School, Belfast  
Saints and Scholars Primary School, Armagh  
Sacred Heart Primary School, Belfast  
Star of the Sea Primary School, Belfast  
Taughmonagh Primary School, Belfast  
The Armstrong Primary School, Armagh



Being Resourceful

Being Reflective

Being Resilient

Being Reciprocal

## About this Resource

This resource is based on the learning experiences of teachers and pupils involved in the joint CCEA/ELB Assessment for Learning Action Research Project. It is a practical guide for teachers and Senior Management, whether they are beginning to develop Assessment for Learning in their school, or embedding and extending Assessment for Learning practice.

A CCEA Publication © 2009

