

B: DEVELOPING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICE

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Peer and self-assessment

- Choose one or two peer and self-assessment strategies from those below to try out in your own teaching. Persevere with them over a period of time, and reflect on their impact on the quality of your pupils' learning.
- Share what you've been doing with other colleagues.
- Think about how this can help you to prepare your pupils to engage with personal learning planning (self-evaluation).

USEFUL STRATEGIES

Involving pupils in marking

Pupils can mark their own work and that of others against clear criteria and learning intentions. The criteria can be developed as a class activity; this clarifies the teacher's expectations and involves the pupils in reflecting on how far their work fulfils these expectations. The aim of the activity should be to identify ways that the pupil whose work is being marked can move forward.

Marking in groups

An alternative to marking individually is for pupils to do this as a group. The focus should be on a recently completed piece of work and the group help each other to assess the work against agreed criteria and suggest ways in which the work could be improved.

Marking against annotated examples

Another useful marking strategy is for groups to work together to see how closely their work measures up against an 'ideal solution'. Whilst it will be important to emphasise that there could be many 'ideal solutions', group discussion should aim to help each pupil understand the extent to which their response achieves the criteria and what they can do to improve.

Individual self-assessment sheets

These can be developed for some elements of a programme and invite pupils to reflect on the extent to which their work has achieved identified criteria. In the light of this they have to indicate what they need to do to improve.

Traffic lights

This has proved a popular strategy and invites pupils to reflect on the current state of their learning in relation to a particular task or activity. If they feel confident that they understand a given piece of work, they use a green indicator (a marker, coloured pencil / crayon, or a sticker). If they are not quite sure of their understanding they use amber. If they are very uncertain, they use a red indicator.

In the light of their judgement, it is important that pupils then think about what they need to do to move from red/amber to green. Students indicating green could be used to advise those who used amber and the teacher can then work with those who used red. An alternative to the traffic lights is to use three versions of smiley faces or post it notes.

Last five minutes

At the start of a lesson, the teacher makes the purpose of the lesson clear and during the last five minutes, one of the pupils explains what they have learned in the lesson. Others in the class question them about this.

Questions and tasks to extend understanding

At the end of a lesson or a unit of work, pupils can be invited to suggest questions that could be used to assess their understanding against the established criteria. These could become homework tasks, which could be assessed by pupils in ways described above.

Gauging self improvement against their own past work

The same problem or task could be reintroduced from time to time, as part of a revision exercise, so that pupils can judge for themselves improvements in the quality of their reasoning. By returning to a problem or task and comparing current responses to earlier ones, they can develop an appreciation of their own mental growth and the development of new forms of thought and perspective.

Portfolios of past work

Pupils could be invited to produce a class or subject portfolio of completed work that illustrates the standards expected. This could be regularly added to with examples from the above activities.

“Plan, Do and Review”

This is a process developed in the High Scope Project for very young children. At the start of any activity the teacher works with the children to decide on the focus for a session. The children engage in the activity or task and then at the end, time is allocated for them to work with the teacher to review what has been learned. Over time, this responsibility can be devolved to the children themselves.

It's OK not to understand and be stuck

An important element of developing the skills of self-evaluation is how the teacher deals with situations where pupils find their work difficult. The language that teachers use is influential in building an acceptance that it is OK to find things difficult and that recognising this is an important aspect of learning. Consider ways in which you can get that message over to pupils. To supplement this teachers have found that introducing a framework for reflecting on learning can help develop confidence in pointing out areas which need support as well as those that have proved successful.

For example, the following list of questions (perhaps using one or two at a time) can be used to start the process. It is usually best to relate these to the specific learning intentions of the lesson.

- Have you learned anything new?
- What were you most pleased with?
- What did you find easy?
- What did you find more difficult?
- What helped you to solve your difficulty?
- What can you do now that you couldn't do before?
- What do you need more help with?
- How would you change this activity for another group?
- Do you have any questions?