

What makes good pedagogy?

“Effective pedagogies embed assessment for learning.

Giving quality feedback to pupils plays a critical role in improving learning when it is used to inform the next steps in learning.”

What have you learnt about your own pedagogy?

Following a recent scrutiny of the school’s literacy books, it was found that there was less self-assessment (or appeared to be less) than, say, maths. This caused me to look at my own class and this was true. It then made me think about all of the other subjects that we teach and how we could get the children to perform self-assessments for these.

It also got me to thinking about what we do with this self-assessment, and how this in turn is fed back to the children.

If they write something in their books, do I comment on this? And if I do, do I give the children time to read my comment about their self-assessment?

What have you learnt about other colleagues’ pedagogy?

A 3rd Year teaching student from the University, working in our Year 3 class, does quick “show of thumb” assessments at points throughout the lesson to quickly assess the children’s understanding. Any “thumbs down” lead to a quick explanation and then another “show of thumbs”. At the end of most pieces of work the student asks the children to “traffic light” their work. They are asked to draw a small coloured circle in either red (didn’t get it), yellow (would like to do some more work to be secure) or green (got it!). This is not the policy of the University, but something picked up on a previous teaching placement at another school.

What aspect(s) of pedagogy have you been exploring?

The aspect of pedagogy that I have been exploring is the use of children's self-assessment and the impact that this has on planning, and then their learning.

I have also done some research on line to try to learn more about self-assessment. The following is taken from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:

In classrooms where assessment for learning is practiced, students know at the outset of a unit of study what they are expected to learn. At the beginning of the unit, the teacher will work with the student to understand what she or he already knows about the topic as well as to identify any gaps or misconceptions (initial/diagnostic assessment). As the unit progresses, the teacher and student work together to assess the student's knowledge, what she or he needs to learn to improve and extend this knowledge, and how the student can best get to that point (formative assessment). Assessment for learning occurs at all stages of the learning process.

In past decades, teachers would design a unit of study that would typically include objectives, teaching strategies, and resources. An evaluation component—the test or examination—may or may not have been included as part of this design (Cooper, 2006). The student's mark on this test or exam was taken as the indicator of his or her understanding of the topic.

There are a number of assessment terms that will appear in any discussion of assessment. Listed below are common interpretations of some of these terms:

Assessment

A working definition of Assessment for learning from a widely cited article contends:

"the term 'assessment' refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged."

Since this seminal article, educators have differentiated assessment according to its purpose:

Assessment for learning

- ❑ comprises two phases—initial or diagnostic assessment and formative assessment
- ❑ assessment can be based on a variety of information sources (e.g., portfolios, works in progress, teacher observation, conversation)
- ❑ verbal or written feedback to the student is primarily descriptive and emphasizes strengths, identifies challenges, and points to next steps
- ❑ as teachers check on understanding they adjust their instruction to keep students on track
- ❑ no grades or scores are given - record-keeping is primarily anecdotal and descriptive
- ❑ occurs throughout the learning process, from the outset of the course of study to the time of summative assessment

Assessment as learning

- ❑ begins as students become aware of the goals of instruction and the criteria for performance
- ❑ involves goal-setting, monitoring progress, and reflecting on results
- ❑ implies student ownership and responsibility for moving his or her thinking forward (metacognition)
- ❑ occurs throughout the learning process

Assessment of learning

- ❑ assessment that is accompanied by a number or letter grade (summative)
- ❑ compares one student's achievement with standards
- ❑ results can be communicated to the student and parents
- ❑ occurs at the end of the learning unit

Evaluation

- ❑ judgment made on the basis of a student's performance

Diagnostic assessment (now referred to more often as "pre-assessment")

- ❑ assessment made to determine what a student does and does not know about a topic
- ❑ assessment made to determine a student's learning style or preferences used to determine how well a student can perform a certain set of skills related to a particular subject or group of subjects
- ❑ occurs at the beginning of a unit of study
- ❑ used to inform instruction:makes up the initial phase of assessment for learning

Formative assessment

- ❑ assessment made to determine a student's knowledge and skills, including learning gaps as they progress through a unit of study
- ❑ used to inform instruction and guide learning
- ❑ occurs during the course of a unit of study
- ❑ makes up the subsequent phase of assessment for learning

Summative assessment

- ❑ assessment that is made at the end of a unit of study to determine the level of understanding the student has achieved
- ❑ includes a mark or grade against an expected standard

What impact is it having on children's learning and how do you know?

This needs to be assessed at the end of the Summer term and compared against how they did their self-assessment earlier in the academic year.

What strategies have you been using to explore good pedagogy?

Currently I have been talking with colleagues from our school and others. I have also been doing research online.

I would like to continue to ask more colleagues the following questions:

Which lessons do you get the children to self-assess their work in?

How often do you do it?

How often would you like to do it?

What strategies / ways do you get the children to self-assess their work?

What do you do with the self-assessments?

How do the children know that their feedback has been heard?

What are you trying to do differently in your classroom as a result of your study?

I am trying to allow the children opportunities to make meaningful self-assessments for all subjects, and then to provide feedback and time to look at this feedback.

For lessons such as PE and Games, I have a display in the class that has the learning objectives for the lessons. Before the lessons we look together at the learning objectives and upon return we do a "show of thumbs" and I question the children who give a "thumbs down" and make a note of their worries to feed in to the next lesson.

In March I had an opportunity to work with our Y6 class. We did some work looking at connectives and conjunctions, working on an exercise taken from a book. At the end of the session, I asked the children to write their self-assessment using a conjunction (and possibly a connective). What they wrote – and how they wrote it - in their self-assessment demonstrated their understanding brilliantly. It was a really worthwhile self-assessment. In response, I wrote a comment back using a conjunction.

With my current class, we wrote postcards home "from Cuba", telling parents the activities we had been doing on holiday there. The children coloured in the stamp with either a green, yellow or red pencil, "traffic-lighting" how they had found the work without "writing all over" their work. They really enjoyed this.

What have I learnt?

I have asked colleagues – from my school and others – to complete a simple questionnaire to look at what methods of self-assessment they use with their children, how often they do it and how they feedback to the children.

I am hoping to get more questionnaires so that I can form a better idea of the different ways of self-assessment that are used with different age ranges and see if it is possible to come up with a list of strategies that are age appropriate that can be shared with colleagues.

Ideally, I would like to go and see other teachers doing their self-assessment and maybe talk to the children about their learning and how they share with their teacher how they got on within the lesson.

I will also be trawling the Internet to find what is available out there to support this research and see if it can be combined with the findings from the questionnaires.

I have seen how the children in my class do their self-assessment at the moment. I will be looking to see how effectively they are doing it by the end of this academic year.

Ideas for self-assessment to be shared with colleagues for possible implementation from September and ask them for their comments and feedback at the end of the Autumn term, Spring and Summer terms. I will also be looking at my own practice to evaluate how the self-assessment is working.

Impact will be measured by conversations with teachers, possibly with children, and by looking at children's self-assessed work to see how effective it is.

Children's Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Dear Teacher,

I would be grateful if you would take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire so that I can get an idea of how and when you use self-assessment with the children in your class. I am collecting ideas and approaches and trying to see what methods children use to self-assess at different ages / stages of their development.

Your name: _____

The School where you work: _____

The Year Group(s) you teach: _____

Which lessons do you regularly ask the children to self-assess their work?

How often do you ask them to self-assess their work?

How often would you like the children to self-assess their work, in an ideal world?

How do the children self-assess their work? (Please continue on the rear of the sheet if more space is required.)

What do you do with the self-assessment / feedback? (Please continue on the rear of the sheet if more space is required.)

How do the children know that their self-assessment has been heard / valued?

Please either email your responses to pneaves@wsgfl.org.uk or return your questionnaire to:
Paul Neaves, c/o Jessie Younghusband School, Woodlands Lane, Chichester PO19 5PA?

Thank you again for your help.

If you would like a copy of the report of my findings, please include your email address:

Questionnaire Feedback

Which lessons do you regularly ask the children to self-assess their work?

YR – most formal inputs, especially when in small groups, although children are asked in whole class situations

Y1 – most Numeracy lessons

Y2 – Literacy / Numeracy / DT

Y4 – Numeracy / PSHCE / Literacy (unaided writing tasks)

Y5 – Numeracy / Literacy / Science / “Free choice writing journals”

Y6 – Literacy / Numeracy

How often do you ask them to self-assess their work?

YR – Assessment discussions are ongoing all year as all the children need adult support

Y1 – nearly every lesson for Numeracy; others, every few

Y2 – Numeracy on a daily basis, Literacy for big pieces of writing, end of topic evaluations

Y4 – most Numeracy lessons and PSHCE lessons

Y5 – every lesson – “where we have not worked in our books, we usually write the learning objective and date and self-assess it as evidence”.

Y6 – Numeracy on a daily basis, Literacy 3 times a week (on average)

How often would you like the children to self-assess their work, in an ideal world?

YR – Any work with clearly identifiable things to assess.

Y1 – Not felt necessary for all lessons, but definitely when introducing a new concept.

Y2 – This is age and stage appropriate. Year 2 are self-assessing enough of their work.

Y4 – sometimes, but also it is important just to have fun and learn and enjoy the moment.

Y5 – Every lesson!

Y6 – “I should get the children to assess their work when it is not written, like when we are working with computers or when we are involved in more investigative work”, “Perhaps constant analysis of learning in every lesson would decrease the impact that self-assessment has”.

How do the children self-assess their work?

YR – look back at work that they have done earlier to compare against / explain work to another – what can they remember? What does their partner remember?

Y1 – success criteria tick list / all together on the carpet / traffic lights on work / smiley or sad faces on work / thumbs up or down / pair-share

Y2 – thumbs up or down or in the middle with eyes open or closed / traffic light dots / writing success criteria / checklists / topic evaluation sheets / end of year report sheets / smiley faces

Y4 – smiley or sad faces on work / traffic light colours on work / mark out of 10 / written sentence / thumbs up or down / sitting themselves in groups according to their understanding of the skills e.g. written methods / ticking on a checklist / written response to the theme or objective of the lesson

Y5 – a written assessment at the end of a piece of work / reminding of the learning objective / 2 or 3 quality full sentences whenever we can / target cards in their maths and literacy books ticked off on a termly basis / thumbs up or down (with closed eyes) to give an immediate idea of understanding during an input in maths.

Y6 – they always assess themselves against the learning objective. In English, this is sometimes expanded to the success criteria that they have developed / traffic-lighting / “hands up for extra help” / edit own writing and identify and amend mistakes

What do you do with the self-assessment / feedback?

YR – support children to take the next step. Build confidence. Praise. Help child to set another target / goal.

Y1 – use it to determine where some need more help or extension

Y2 – Thumbs – get recorded on planning as part of evaluation. Traffic lights get referred to in marking comments. Writing checklist has both teacher and child assessment on it and then a written comment and target for next piece of writing. Topic evaluation sheets in the form of 3 stars and a wish. Report sheets are read and what the children have enjoyed doing is noted.

Y4 – make a list of the children against the learning objective – those that need more support and those that are confident. Planning will change to match understanding. Children will work in guided groups or catch up / support during an assembly / playtime

Y5 – read it as often as I can. Adapt the next lesson if needed where they need help and make a note of this to ensure that I get back to them. In maths (when I have extra TA support) we run extra support sessions on a Friday morning so that individuals / small groups can have that bit of extra support

Y6 – use it to back up own assessment of the children’s performance in the lesson. Depending on the feedback it could mean that lessons are changed.

How do the children know that their self-assessment has been heard / valued?

YR – Relationship with adult – time given / opportunity to add to their “best bit” book

Y1 – verbal feedback / written feedback

Y2 – verbal feedback / written feedback / stickers given for each criteria on their checklist that teacher and child tick and agree on

Y4 – verbal feedback / written response against their assessment / changing working groups so that they are supported if they need it

Y5 – always acknowledged with either a written comment or at least a tick and “face” if appropriate. The child will be thanked for detailed assessments.

Y6 – by commenting on the self-assessment / by finding time in the next lesson to review aspects that individuals or the class found difficult / written marking comments.

It was very interesting that the questionnaires from 2 year 6 teachers from 2 separate schools gave almost identical responses.

I have also interviewed some children to get their views on self-assessment.

Year 3

Why do you think we ask you to write your own self-assessments?

- MP You can see what we need to practise, what we find hard and also what we might not be doing the next lesson on the same thing. (I unpicked this and they meant that in their books it finishes one thing off ready for the next.)
- JS To see what we don't need to practice and to see what we think we are good at.
- JO To show you if we found it tricky or easy so we can give the next work harder or easier or move us up or down a table.
- TT So you know how we felt about doing the work.
- OH So next time we do the work you can help us because you know what we need help with.
- SC To see if we are getting better.
- OW To see if we need harder or easier work.
- HW If we are stuck on something you can help us improve on it and get better at it.
- LC To see how we found it.

What type of "self-assessment" do you enjoy doing most?

- Smiley / sad face? 14
- Traffic lights 2
- Thumbs up/down 3
- Writing a comment 8

Which information gives me (the teacher) the most information?

Writing what they found difficult – this was unanimous!