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Embedding formative assessment through a Teacher Learning Community

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St Aloysius' Catholic Junior School

A Guide to Formative Assessment



Learning collaboratively in a
Teacher Learning Community

TEACHER LEARNING COMMUNITY (TLC)

From September 2013 to July 2015 a Teacher Learning Community (TLC) met for monthly meetings. The TLC consisted of all the current teachers at St Aloysius Catholic Junior School. The TLC focus was on formative assessment. Over the two year period we discussed current practice, explored new ideas and embedded the principles of formative assessment in our own practice, ensuring that it became a central part of teaching and learning. We also updated our assessment policy so that it reflected the changes to our practice and our clear expectations for formative assessment in every lesson

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

At St Aloysius' Catholic Junior School formative assessment is used to identify where learners are in their learning, where they are going and how to get to there. In order for this to be successful, we believe that the teacher, learners and their peers each play an important role. Formative assessment takes place in every lesson, every day. We use 5 key strategies identified by Leahy, Lyon, Thompson and Wiliam (2005) for formative assessment. These are outlined in the table below.

Unpacking formative assessment

	Where the learner is going	Where the learner is	How to get there
Teacher	Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions	Engineering effective discussions, tasks, and activities that elicit evidence of learning	Providing feedback that moves learners forward
Peer		Activating students as learning resources for one another	
Learner		Activating students as owners of their own learning	

KEY FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

In our final TLC meeting each teacher designed a quick 'how to' guide for one of their favourite strategies. These are shown on the following pages. The table below contains some examples of what each formative assessment strategy would look like in the classroom (the ones that have a 'how to' guide are shown in bold).

Key Strategies	Examples of what this looks like
<p>1. Clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success</p>	<p>Having a clear learning objective on the board (WALT) Pupils taking ownership of success criteria Class Success Criteria (pg 4) Success criteria on the board or in the books Sharing the outcome at the start of the lesson so pupils know what they are working towards. Sharing Exemplars (pg 5)</p>
<p>2. Engineering effective classroom discussions, activities and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning</p>	<p>Just a Minute (pg 6) Range of questioning Involving all pupils (no hands up, Question Cup (pg 7), targeted questioning, whiteboards, hand signals) Hinge Point Question (pg 8) Find the fib Find the Mistake (pg 9) Wait time Chance to rehearse answers Best Composite Answer (pg 10) Talk partners with a clear purpose (modelled with structure) Mini-whiteboards (pg 11) Exit ticket (pg 12)</p>
<p>3. Providing feedback that moves learning forward</p>	<p>Verbal feedback in lesson Written feedback on every third piece of work in pupils' books Use of a school marking code Specific time to respond to comments (pg 13)</p>
<p>4. Activating learners as instructional resources for one another</p>	<p>Peer marking (eg 2 stars and a Wish- pg 14) Visualiser to display work Phone a Friend (pg 15) 'Experts' Be the Teacher (pg 16) Sharing good mistakes</p>
<p>5. Activating learners as the owners of their own learning</p>	<p>Respond to Feedback (pg 17) Articulating their learning Entrance Ticket (pg 18)</p>



What is it?

The class teacher should collectively come up with the most important things that pupils need to demonstrate to show they have achieved the learning objective.

Pupils should be able to assess themselves and peers against the success criteria.

When does it work best?

Principally, this will work in every subject that you would usually use a success criterion. This technique works particularly well when there are clear steps to follow, for example solving a multiplication problem using column method.

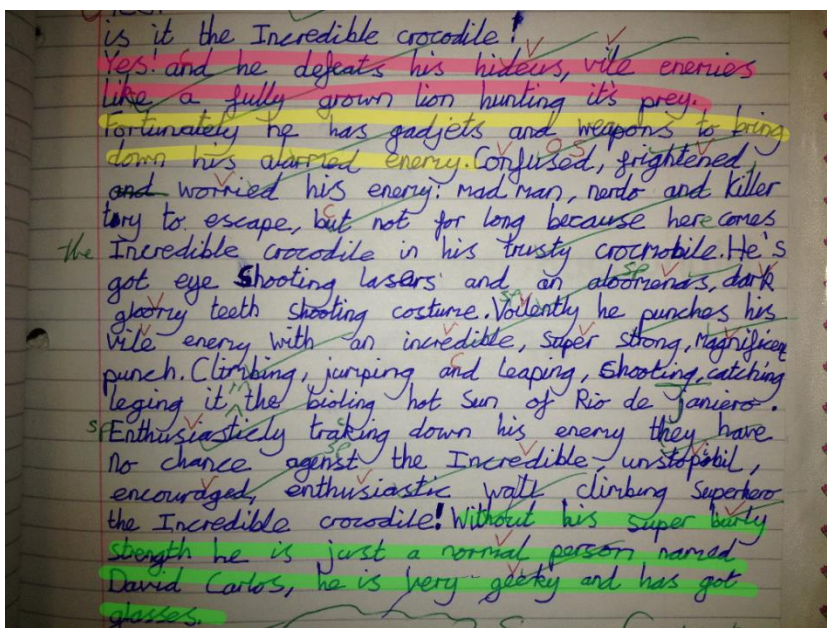
The teacher will have to develop the children's responses to ensure they are using the correct vocabulary in each step.

It is helpful if the steps in the success criteria are in a considered order, especially if the completion of one is dependent on another.



SHARING EXEMPLARS

As part of your teaching, display some finished student work from a previous year, another class or even a mock-up by yourself. Children then get a clear idea of the end product that is expected.



This worked particularly well in the Year 5 English “Persuasive Letter Writing Competition” unit. A former pupil won the competition, so for future classes we displayed parts of her winning letter to inspire children and show them the level of quality expected.

Just a minute



Pupils have one minute to share their prior or acquired knowledge about a specific subject.

This technique can be used very easily in all lessons.

Start of the lesson (initial assessment) - tell your Talk Partner everything that you already know about...

- Ancient Egypt/ancient Greece/the Victorians (History)*
- St. Lucia, tourist attractions in London (Geography)*
- Electricity, the life and findings of Charles Darwin (Science)*
- Using dialogue, writing a report (English)*
- Equivalent fractions, 3D shapes, angles, (Mathematics)*

This could follow a homework task, in which pupils have to research a specific topic prior to commencing a topic.

End of the lesson tell your Talk Partner/as many people as you can what you have learnt in the lesson.

Pupils may ask the speaker a question at the end of the minute.

Sentence starters can scaffold talk.

QUESTION CUP

Alternative to hands up



Write all the children's name on lolly sticks and put them into a cup. Do not let the students put their hands up to answer a question. Instead, pick a name at random from the question cup and that child will answer the question.

When to do it:

Throughout main teaching and plenary.

Whenever asking questions for the whole class. It keeps children alert and stops them calling out.

Helpful hints:

- .Different colour sticks depending on ability level. This allows the question to be tailored to the appropriate level.**
- .After name has been chosen, leave it out so other children get a chance.**

Hinge Point Question

A hinge point question, as the name indicates, is a question that determines the direction of the lesson. The path the lesson takes is dependent on the assessment by the teacher of the pupils understanding. For a direction to be determined, a hinge point question must be based on a concept in a lesson that is important for students to understand before the teacher moves on in the lesson. The teacher then uses their assessment of this question to tailor/change the lesson to meet the pupils needs.

Features of a good hinge point questions

- There can be more than one question.
- It usually falls around half way through a lesson.
- It should take no longer than a few minutes.
- The teacher must be able to easily interpret the students answers.
- All students should be able to access the question.
- Questions should not be designed which are easy to guess.
- Questions should be challenging enough that children are sorted into understanding and not understanding.

Examples of hinge point questions.

1. Identify the adjectives in this sentence.

The brown cow jumped swiftly over the metal gate.

2. Write down four multiples of '5'

3. Which object can be picked up with a magnet?

- a) Iron nail
- b) Copper wire
- c) Piece of wood
- d) Piece of glass

Hinge point questions can be used to determine:

- Who stays on the carpet for more help or an extension.
- Who needs more help.
- Who works with the teacher or teaching assistant
- Who needs a to move to the next step.



Technique:

Find the mistake.

How it works:

The teacher displays a question that has been incorrectly answered or a sentence that is not grammatically correct and the children must find the mistake in it and explain what has gone wrong.

This technique can be used as a plenary to a lesson (e.g. maths) or a starter activity leading to/connected to a main teach. The mistake could be a common mistake that pupils are making (e.g. capital letters, full stops, incorrectly punctuated speech).

Example of when it works well:

Maths: "Find the mistake in this question"

$$0.7 + 0.8 = 0.15$$

Children to locate mistake (could talk to partner and then explain how the mistake happened). They could also then fix the mistake or answer it correctly on their whiteboard. The mistake could be used as a teaching point for the rest of the lesson.

English: "Find the mistake in this sentence"

Last nite I playd football

Children to spot mistakes in the sentence and then write it correctly on their whiteboard.



Best Composite Answer



Students in a small group build a composite answer by taking the best features of each of their individual answers, making them recognise strengths and weaknesses across the original individual answers. Students who did not originally understand some aspects of the question learn a lot from their peers.



We found that it worked well especially for the lower attainers as it supports their learning and understanding. It was used successfully both in plenaries and in group discussions. This technique also supports speaking and listening as no one in the group knows who will be asked to give the answer.



Technique:

Mini Whiteboards.

How it works:

Each student has a mini whiteboard and pen and uses it to answer questions posed by the teacher. The whiteboards are then held up and shown to the class teacher.

Mini whiteboards can be used to gauge how well the students understand the learning and whether the class are ready to move on or keep practicing the concept. They can also be used to identify students who are struggling with the concept and will later need adult support during the task.

Children's whiteboard work can be shown to the rest of the class under the visualiser to clarify mistakes or show good examples.

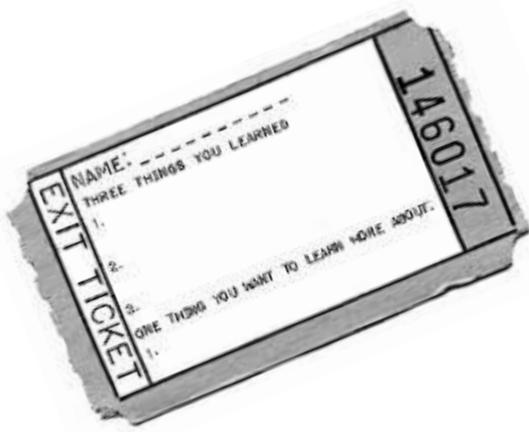
In the writing phases of English lessons, whiteboards can be used to begin a paragraph or a piece of writing on the carpet before moving to tables and transferring it into books.

Example of when it works well:

Maths: "Use the column method to answer $482 + 243$ ". Teacher then observes children as they answer this on their whiteboard and identifies pupils who are struggling/exceeding/making 'good mistakes'. After the given time, the teacher asks pupils to hold up and show their whiteboards. Use (good) mistakes as a teaching point e.g. forgetting to bridge 10s and exchange numbers etc. Use the information gathered about the children's understanding to then decide who is struggling, who is secure in the knowledge and who is exceeding. Those struggling can then be assigned to work with an adult during the task.

English: "Choose a fronted adverbial to start your paragraph". Having observed modelled writing, children begin their own writing on their mini whiteboard as a class, first brainstorming possibilities and then choosing and writing one. The next part of the sentence can then be moved onto. Children are more confident trying out new ideas and getting things wrong when using whiteboards. The teacher can then call up examples to show their writing as a good example, or show how to improve and up level it.





Exit Ticket

What is it?

At or near the end of a lesson ask the class a question and give each pupil a small piece of paper to write the answer on. As the pupils leave the room they hand in their exit ticket. The teacher can then read through their responses after the lesson and while planning the next lesson. It is up to the teacher if they wish to keep the tickets anonymous or not. It is not necessary to mark the tickets and they can usually be thrown away after they have been used.

When does it work best?

This technique works well when teaching new concepts, especially when the pupils are required to know specific definitions, for example, define an angle. It can also be used to consolidate learning or apply learning to a real life context. Completing an exit ticket is a fantastic way for pupils to articulate their learning. The 'Exit Tickets' could be pre-printed and cut up with a specific problem on or the question could be written on the board and the children simply answer on their ticket.



Specific time to respond to comments

Following next step marking, pupils are given specific allocated time to read comments from the teacher and respond to them. This time is almost always at the start of the lesson. Responding should be done silently and independently. This gives the teacher time to go around and support children that need it.

This should be done in every lesson so it becomes embedded in the timetable and children are used to automatically looking and responding to marking.

To start with the teacher should model responding to marking so children understand the expectation. This prevents children rushing responding, making responding to marking more effective.

Feedback can be given by:

- A question
- Statement for thinking about
- Filling in gaps. E.g a b__t__e__y gives power to a circuit.
- Use a dictionary to correct spellings (sp)

Two Stars And A Wish!



Why Use this?

This is a fantastic technique for peer support!

How Is it used?

Dupils are to exchange books and give comments to a peer by writing two positive things(stars) about the work and one thing that they ‘wish’ the pupil would do to make it better(use green pen). The comments should be specific to the success criteria or the qualities of the work and give clear guidance as next steps on what to do to improve.

When to use it?

This is most suitable for the plenary of a lesson!

PHONE- A- FRIEND



What is it?

Sometimes when children are chosen randomly to answer a question they really do not know the answer, and may feel awkward and embarrassed. At these times it may be useful to allow them to 'phone-a-friend', another student in the class who may be able to help them answer the question.

Teacher: "Would you like to phone a friend?"

Pupil: "Please can I phone...?"

Then the child who has been 'called' answers the question.



When does this work well?

This technique can be used during any main teaching when a pupil, who has been randomly selected to answer, does not know the answer to a question. For example, *What is an obtuse angle?* This technique should not be used if the child could answer the question with a clue or reshaping of the question. However, the technique is useful if a pupil is struggling to answer or genuinely does not know the answer!

Be the teacher

Students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning and become the teacher. The teacher selects a student to teach the other members of their class how to complete the given task. The student must complete the task while also explaining each of the steps they are taking. Teachers should also encourage the students to give reasons to the class for each of the steps. Students enjoy completing this activity when it is a topic they are feeling confident with.



Example:

In mathematics, students have completed several days on column addition. They are given a problem on the board and asked to teach their classmates how to complete the sum. Students should be verbalising the steps they take.

The child is given the sum $421 + 329$. The student would explain how to set out the sum using the column method and why it is important for each number to be written in the correct place value column.

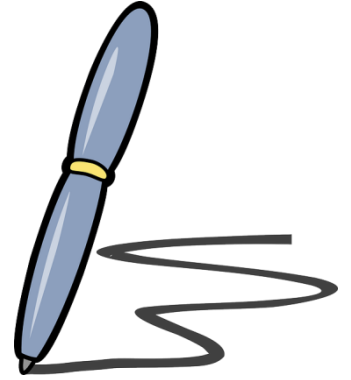
When adding the units column, students may ask their peers 'what will happen if the total is greater than 9?' or 'I will write the 0 in the units column and carrier the 1 over into the tens column'.

Respond to Marking

What is it?

Evaluation technique.

Informs the teacher of the student's understanding.



How to use it:

After you have marked a piece of work, and given a next step, pupils will action the comment using a green pen. This could be through answering a question you have posed or editing their work.

When to do it:

Time should be set aside at the beginning of a lesson for children to respond to your feedback.



ENTRANCE TICKET

(WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW)

At the beginning of a topic, invite pupils to write down questions that they want answered. Then use these questions to inform your planning to personalise the class' learning. Research lessons can even be devised where children are given some of the more tenuously-linked (but interesting!) questions to find out themselves. By the end of the topic, revisit these questions to see how many the class now know answers for, or if they still need to be answered.



This technique is best used at the start of topics in Science, History or Geography. It encourages an enquiry-led approach and gives the children more ownership over their learning. Using the chrome books can be helpful for this. During Science Week, we used it to allow children to ask whatever they wanted to know about science. We then devised learning opportunities to try and investigate some of the questions. For example, a few children asked how volcanoes worked so we made our own from clay and created exploding lava.