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Author	Shevlin, Tracey
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# Embedding formative assessment through a Teacher Learning Community

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Tracey Shevlin

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To discuss this case study, please contact us via email [customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk](mailto:customersupport@camdenlearning.org.uk)



## Key Points

- Teacher Learning Community providing sustained joint practice development
- Focus on Assessment for Learning

## Purpose

### What were your reasons for doing this development work?

The [Education Endowment Foundation](#) research suggests that feedback is one of the most effective teaching tools so we wanted to develop our use of formative assessment.

Knowing that we are all creatures of habit and therefore one off INSETs do not contribute to lasting change in classroom practice, we decided to set up a Teacher Learning Community (TLC) in order to ensure that meaningful joint practice development and research could take place.

We set out to improve the quality of our feedback by using our TLC as a vehicle to embed formative assessment.

### Who were the identified target learners?

All pupils.

### What were your success criteria?

- Are lesson objectives clarified, shared and understood?
- Does the teacher engineer effective discussions, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of learning?
- Are students activated as learning resources for one another?
- Are students owners of their own learning?
- Does the teacher provide feedback that moves learners forward?

### What did you do? (What success criteria did you use?)

We trialled a range of different AfL approaches and strategies during lessons to assess pupils formatively. Each strategy fell into one of the 5 key areas of formative assessment:

- Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions

- Engineering effective discussions, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of learning
- Activating students as learning resources for one another
- Activating students as owners of their own learning
- Providing feedback that moves learners forward

### **What specific teaching resources did you use?**

One of the main resources we utilised was mini-whiteboards. Other resources included exit tickets, post-its, lolly sticks, traffic lights, success criteria, green pens, highlighters- these were all things already available in our classrooms. We also thought very carefully about SMARTs because some of the strategies had to be planned in as key points in the lesson, for example hinge point questions.

When our TLC came to an end we compiled a resource (attached below) detailing all the AfL techniques we found were most helpful. This resource was handed out to all teachers and when new teachers start, we give them a copy to so they can see the level of formative assessment we expect in lessons and to give them some guidance.

## **Outcomes and Impact**

### **What has been the impact on pupil learning and teaching?**

Across the school (as evidenced in lesson observations, in pupil work and planning) quality AfL opportunities are being included, and teachers are using AfL to adapt their teaching within lessons and to plan for future learning. One key change we have seen is much more flexibility in lessons. Teachers are adapting the lesson at the time to meet the needs of learners. They are more learner-focused, continually assessing and adapting as they teach. They have taken the most effective techniques and are embedding these in their practice.

One of the things teachers liked about the Teacher Learning Community was *“Being able to share new ideas/ techniques to implement into my teaching practice in an informal way.”*

Lessons are being carefully planned to ensure that there are lots of opportunities for teachers to assess what pupils are already able to do early on in lessons (eg using a hinge question), ensuring that learners’ time is not wasted going over what they already know. Pupils at all levels of attainment are being regularly challenged. During lessons pupils are very clear about what they need to do to be successful and they are heavily involved in evaluating their own and others’ efforts which gives them an even better understanding of what they need to do to improve their learning. It is clear that pupils are taking more ownership of their learning.

### **Evidence of impact on pupil learning and teaching/leadership**

Lesson observations carried out by external leaders have identified and reported clear evidence of the impact of Assessment for Learning such as, questioning, mini plenaries to clarify, talk partners and mini white boards to rehearse and check learning and understanding. In our previous OFSTED an area identified for development was getting the higher attainers started on work earlier. We are now seeing the use of hinge questions in many lessons- a pivotal point in a lesson which determines who starts work immediately and who remains on the carpet with the teacher for the teaching input. Those pupils who begin work immediately receive their adult input later in the lesson to take them to greater depth.

*“Pupils are more responsible for learning”* (Teacher involved in TLC). One example of this is pupils creating their own success criteria for a learning objective as opposed to teachers giving them a predetermined list to stick in their book which we would have done in the past. Another example is pupils completing exit tickets- showing their teacher what they know, which feeds directly into planning for the next lesson. In this way lessons are tailored to the pupils’ needs. Pupils are much more aware of what is expected of them, how they are performing and what they can do to improve within lessons. This is evident in lessons and books across the school.