

RESOURCE

Teaching Skills Pathway

COURSE 4: MAKE EFFECTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE USE OF ASSESSMENT

Task 2: Sense-checking assessments

In Module 1 of this course, Matt shares Dylan William's suggestion that school leaders ask themselves four questions in order to become critical consumers of educational research:

1. Does this solve a problem I have?
2. Can it be implemented here?
3. How much additional achievement will we get?
4. How much will it cost?

How can you use these questions to 'sense-check' your own assessment practices?

Task 2: Feedback

Matt says that effective feedback tends to:

- Be specific, accurate and clear (e.g. “It was good because you...” rather than just “correct”);
- Compare what a pupil is doing now with what they’ve done wrong before (e.g. “I can see you were focused on improving X as it is much better than last time’s Y...”);
- Encourage and support further effort;
- Be given sparingly so that it is meaningful;
- Provide specific guidance on how to improve and not just tell pupils when they are wrong.

To what extent does your feedback meet these criteria? What do you do well? What can you do better?

Task 3: Marking

Matt says that marking should be meaningful, manageable, and motivating?

To what extent do you think your own marking meets these 3Ms? What do you do well? What could you improve?

Task 4: Learning intentions

In Module 2, Matt says that learning intentions help to establish:

1. Establishing where pupils are in their learning
2. Establishing where they are going
3. Establishing how to get there

He goes on to say that:

Learning intentions are measurable statements which articulate what pupils should know and/or be able to do by the end of a lesson or sequence of lessons. The best learning intentions are pupil-centred rather than teacher-centred – they set out what pupils will learn, not what the teacher will teach and do so in language that pupils will understand.

The best learning intentions actually shape what pupils learn because when pupils know what they're expected to learn they can direct their attention towards those ideas or concepts. They help pupils to attend to the curriculum content they need to learn and avoid distractions, thus making efficient use of their limited working memory capacities.

Having clear learning intentions not only helps pupils to narrow their focus to the most important knowledge and skills, it can also help them to organise their notes, track their progress towards meeting the outcomes, and improve their ability to self-study.

Note your reflections. To what extent do your learning intentions meet the above criteria? Try drafting learning intentions for a lesson/sequence of lessons you're due to teach soon and test them against the above...

Task 5: Questioning

In Module 4, Matt says that one of the most effective forms of closed questions is the multiple-choice question used at a hinge point of a lesson when a teacher needs to check whether pupils have grasped a key concept and are ready to move on to study another. Usually, pupils' ability to understand the next concept being taught is contingent on their mastery of the concept that has just been taught. It is important, therefore, that the teacher assesses pupils' levels of mastery before moving on.

A hinge question is a diagnostic tool which a teacher employs when their pupils reach the "hinge" point. Pupils' responses provide the teacher with valuable evidence about what their pupils know, don't know and need to do next. A class's response to a hinge question should inform the teacher whether to completely reteach the topic, recap the main points, or move on to the next topic.

To be effective, every pupil must respond to a hinge question within a set timeframe, ideally one to two minutes. All pupils must participate in the process. As such, it is best to avoid a "hands up" approach and instead employ a tactic that ensures every pupil shows the teacher their answer at the same time. This enables the teacher to assess every pupil and prevents pupils from being unduly influenced by their peers.

Simultaneous, all-class responses can be achieved by using mini whiteboards on which pupils write their answers then hold them up when instructed. Alternatively, voting buttons could be used. Or, more simply, pupils could hold up lettered, numbered or coloured cards to indicate their answer, or even just their fingers.

Write a hinge question to use in a lesson/sequence of lessons you are due to teach soon. Test it out against the above criteria.

Task 6: Activating pupils as instructional resources for each other

A simple way of activating pupils as instructional resources for each other is to ensure that all work is peer-assessed before it is handed to the teacher.

This process of peer-monitoring, peer-assessing, and peer-adjusting work can be aided if we:

- Allocate five minutes in the middle and at the end of a lesson in order to consider ‘What have we found out? What remains unresolved or unanswered?’
- Ask pupils to attach a self-assessment form to every formal piece of work they hand in
- Include a one-minute essay at the end of an instruction-based lesson in which pupils summarise the two or three main points and the questions that still remain for them (and, thus, next time, for the teacher)
- Ask pupils to attach a note to any formal piece of work in which they are honest about what they do and do not understand
- Teach pupils to evaluate work in the same way that teachers do so that pupils become more accurate as peer reviewers and self-assessors, and more inclined to “think like teachers” in their work.
- Start lessons with a survey of the most burning questions pupils may have. Then, as part of the final plenary, judge how well the questions were addressed, which ones remain, and what new ones emerged.
- Leave the second half of a unit deliberately ‘open’ to allow pupils to frame and pursue the inquiry (rather than be directed by the teacher) based on the key questions that remain and clues that emerge at the end of the first half
- Get pupils to develop a self-profile of their strengths and weaknesses as learners at the start of the year whereby they consider how they learn best, what strategies work well for them, what type of learning is most difficult, and what they wish to improve upon. Then, structure periodic opportunities for pupils to monitor their efforts and reflect on their struggles, and successes, and possible edits to their own profiles.

Reflect on this list. Do you do these things whenever engaging in self- and peer-assessment? What works well now and what could be improved?

Task 7: Activating pupils as owners of their own learning

Metacognition describes the processes involved when pupils plan, monitor, evaluate and make changes to their own learning behaviours. Metacognition is often considered to have two dimensions:

1. Metacognitive knowledge, and
2. Self-regulation.

Metacognitive knowledge refers to what pupils know about learning. This includes:

- The pupil's knowledge of their own cognitive abilities (e.g. 'I have trouble remembering key dates in this period of history')
- The pupil's knowledge of particular tasks (e.g. 'The politics in this period of history are complex')
- The pupil's knowledge of the different strategies that are available to them and when they are appropriate to the task (e.g. 'If I create a timeline first it will help me to understand the overall period of history').

Self-regulation, meanwhile, refers to what pupils do about learning. It describes how pupils monitor and control their cognitive processes. For example, a pupil might realise that a particular strategy is not yielding the results they expected so they decide to try a different strategy.

Put another way, self-regulated pupils are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and can motivate themselves to engage in, and improve, their learning.

How do you explicitly teach pupils to become metacognitive, self-regulated learners?

Final task: Action Planning

Now put all the above into an action plan to ensure you enact positive change in your teaching practice.

Focus on no more than 3 take-away tasks at this stage. For each, set out what you want to change, how you will change it (what specific step-by-step actions you will take), when you will change it and what success will look like (the 'why?' or intended outcome).

What?	How?	When?	Why?
1			
2			
3			