Alcester
Academy

Teaching & Learning

Welcome

Firstly, a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to this, the third edition of the Teaching and Learning Journal. I think this really demonstrates the unity within the academy and the genuine drive for us to 'be the best that we can be' as teachers.

The TEEP journey continues! Over recent years, we've introduced the TEEP learning cycle as an extension to the 'Learning Pathway' model we were previously following. I have been really pleased with the support and engagement that all staff have shown towards this. Working in the TEEP families has been an excellent experience and I have personally enjoyed engaging in discussions regarding teaching strategies and techniques. I am aware that many other staff hugely value this too - let's face it, being the best teacher we can be is what we're here for after all!

I believe teachers have a good understanding of the TEEP cycle and we have all developed specific expertise in the area our own TEEP family worked. We're now at an interesting point of development; exploring how we can further develop the TEEP families and the support we offer to each other. We have plans for the next academic year to move towards yet more collaboration with regards to Teaching and Learning, both within departments and cross curricular. I am optimistic that even in a time when there are so many external pressures on schools, we can put a significant chunk of CPD time towards Teaching and Learning.

I look forward to the launch of the next steps in September 2018!

Paul Hyde

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Inside this issue:

Welcome to a New Term!

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Are you talking to me or chewing a brick?

Questions demand responses; even rhetorical playground ones like this one. Maybe not articulated responses, but internalised and mulled over. When I sat down to think about the question of using questions, I had to do quite a bit of questioning myself. I had to stop and think about my classroom use of questioning and that was hard as I have always been someone to question – from a very young age, I have always been the sort of character who will not necessarily accept what I am told – I need to see the reason behind it and perhaps this is why questioning has become such an integral part of my teaching, without me even noticing it. I am a curious person, always have been; could this be why I enjoy teaching teenagers so much? Because, let's face it, teenagers are not, by definition, a breed who take information without questioning the validity – "what do I need that for?" You have in front of you at any one time, up to thirty characters who will not necessarily just accept what you say without questioning – so use this to your advantage. Two years of teaching a certain brand of male teenager questioning me why we study Shakespeare and what use it will be, has developed my "bounce" phase of questioning – "You watch Love Island don't you?" "Who snogged who?" "What would happen if xxx snogs xxx?" "What would happen if Romeo had snogged Rosaline before Juliet?" Same dilemma. Shakespeare's version of all your favourite reality TV programmes. Just earlier.

Bloom's or TEEP?

Both. This is another rhetorical question. To keep you interested and involved, because that is the joy behind questioning.

Studies show that in secondary education a combination of low and high level questioning is needed rather than the exclusive use of one. We are all familiar with Bloom's Taxonomy. We all have our own versions of it, our own sentence stems, our own little visual reminders (mine is the story of Goldilocks). It works. It really does. You may need to begin with planning questions and although this can take away the spontaneity of questioning, it is a start and soon the questions become second nature. Start with the big question – what do you want them to leave the lesson with? Next, how do you get them there? This fits TEEP – at every stage, you can start with a question – how do I prepare for learning? How do we agree a learning outcome? How do I impart information? Then you can start the infill of questions – each phase can be introduced with a series of questions so that pupils do the work. Start with the basics, the closed question,

the lower order thinking skill – "Who can remember/recall…?" and go from there. This is where the differentiation starts. The speculative thinking - the wait time, the gap where you can see the cogs turning - has been proven to produce higher cognitive discussion which in turn leads to high level learning.

Pose pause pounce bounce

The well documented phrase "Pose pause pounce bounce" is key. I'm not sure I am aware of when I am "posing" or "pouncing" necessarily, but if I stop to think, this is exactly what I do. I will ask a question, wait to see who will put a hand up, and then bounce the response around the room – "who agrees with this? Why?" "What can we add to this?" "Who can help with this?"   The pause phase is where I sometimes come unstuck – not wanting the tumbleweed moment, and not wanting the ten voices shouting at me. However, I'm not good at hands up so I will often get the multiple voices and I would argue that this allows for livelier discussion, more pupil involvement, better behaviour, more learning achieved – pupils are not afraid to give it a go – if they are not ready to respond, they won't. When they hear someone say what they were thinking, they become more confident. Next time, they may voice their response, even if only to their neighbour; after this, they may be confident enough to be part of the "bounce" phase.

So are we interested?

Questions make life/lessons more interesting – both for you and for the pupil. In a bizarre way, the part of the lesson I least enjoy is when they are in the "apply to demonstrate" phase of the lesson – the lesson stops being a two way conversation and becomes me – the teacher – not talking to them, checking they are demonstrating their understanding, feeling a little left out because I cannot interact with them.

I believe questioning makes our job easier – it is differentiation without thinking about it, without multiple versions of hand outs, without having to think for a long time about what to put in the differentiation box on a lesson plan. Because just by questioning, you are differentiating in a way that will work. You are testing them, their ideas, their understanding. One idea leads to another; one comment in the room sets off another and so on – you can start with the basic and closed and watch how the pupils take it to the open, abstract and high level where real understanding takes place.

Take the brakes off reality – the word "might" takes away the definitive and the worry that you may be wrong.   "What if…?" is a key question within my lesson which gives all pupils the confidence to understand that anything is possible and within reason, every comment and idea deserves air time and discussing.

Jen Hoskin

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Thinking for Learning

This academic year saw the launch of the TEEP cycle and we have all started to embed the principles of TEEP into our lessons.

There are 5 elements which underpin the teaching and learning cycle: Assessment for Learning; Collaborative Learning; Effective use of ICT; Accelerated Learning and Thinking for Learning. This article will cover Thinking for Learning

The SSAT writes that the teacher's role is to 'develop independent thinkers who can select the most appropriate tools and strategies to solve problems', and sets out 10 steps to incorporating thinking skills in learning. Planning our lessons to develop thinking skills will play an important role in developing the learning of our students.

Many of us will already be using activities in our lessons which support Thinking for Learning, which may include Think, Pair, Share; Diamond Nine; De Bono's Thinking Hats or Mind Maps.

I have been trialling a few different Thinking for Learning activities, and they are available in a booklet on the staff shared T:\Admin\TEEP\Resources

Before, Before, After, After (BBAA).

This tool is particularly appropriate for creative writing in English. In the English Language GCSE exam, pupils are given a picture stimulus and asked to write a description. This is a very open ended task, and some of our learners struggle without a framework as a springboard. This is where BBAA works extremely well.

Firstly, students will consider 'What is happening now?' to start their piece of writing. Then they consider two different 'Before' time frames, and two different 'After' time frames. This helps them to construct 5 separate paragraphs or creative writing, each with a very different and very specific focus.

Thinking for Learning activities can be used at all stages of the TEEP cycle, from 'Thunks' in Prepare for Learning, to '3,2,1' in Review.

Please have a look at the resources on staff shared, and feel free to get in touch if you'd like any more information. *H Farnell*

What is happening now?

What was happening:
- An hour ago
- A day ago
- A month ago
- A year ago?

CHOOSE 2

What will happen:
- In one hour
- In one day
- In one month
- In one year?

5 Quick Tips For Being 'Mindful' in Your Classroom

Following on from our recent CPD on Mindfulness, why not have a think about the following areas:

Create time for quiet reflection in a lesson. In this time, really focus upon the senses (sounds, smells, temperature etc) or spend some time consciously thinking about breathing
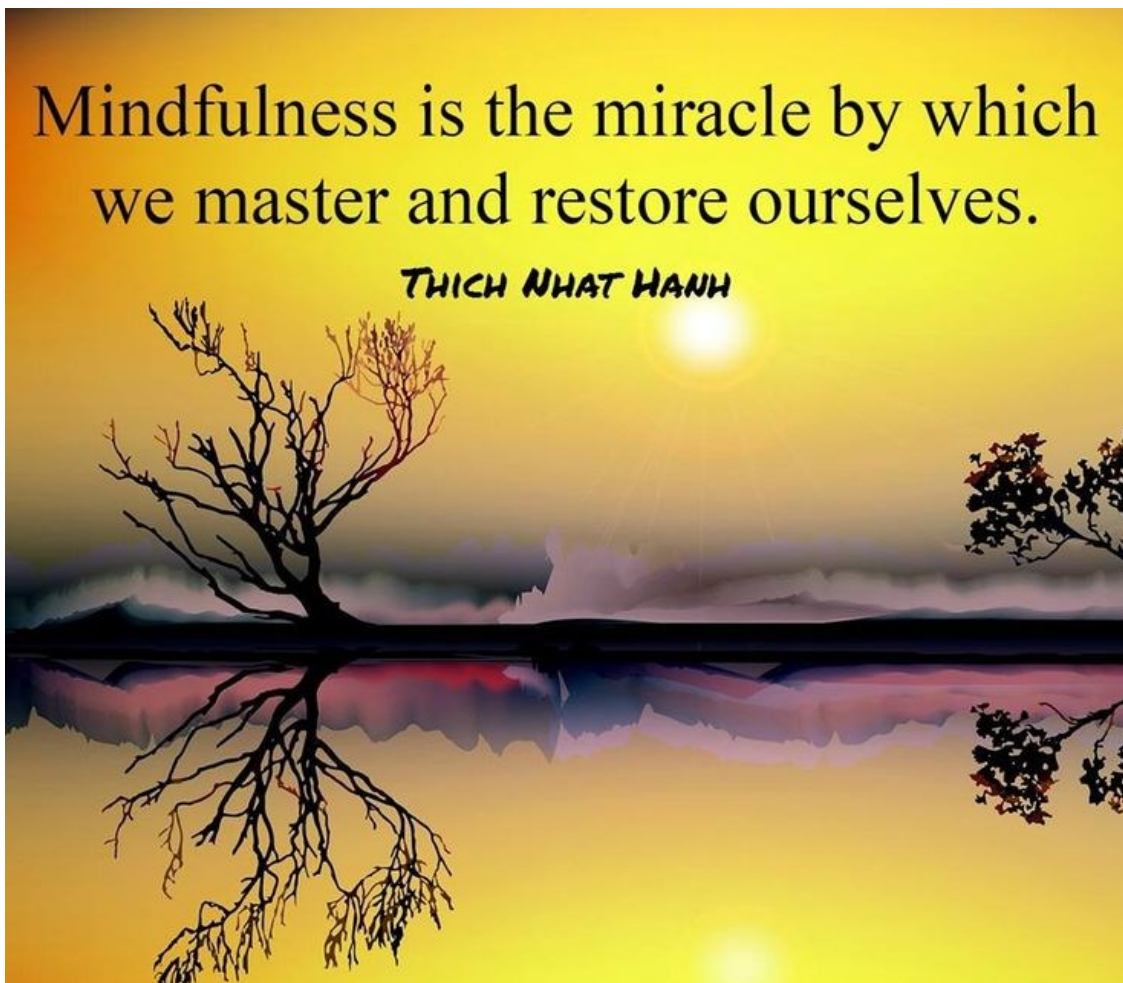
Practice gratitude

Model how to be mindful to your students

Concentrate upon good posture

Bring nature in to your classroom

Mindfulness is the miracle by which we master and restore ourselves.
THICH NHAT HANH

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Ofsted Framework – Changes to the Framework for 2019

What 'The Key' predict as being different

The development of the new inspection framework centres around 3 key principles, according to a June 2018 speech by Amanda Spielman at the Bryanston Education Summit. These are:

- Making inspections about more than a grade, including focusing more on what makes a school distinctive
- Using data appropriately. This means greater emphasis on what pupils know, how you know they know it, and what you do when they don't. This feeds into curriculum inspection
- Not penalising schools for being unable to address wider issues of society, such as obesity and knife crime. The framework is therefore unlikely to be broadened in this way
- "Even sharper" focus on the curriculum

Ofsted has been carrying out research on how schools implement the curriculum since spring 2017. In April 2018, its national director of education, Sean Harford, wrote about developing "an even sharper focus on the curriculum" for the 2019 inspection framework. So what is this likely to mean?

A new definition

The first stage of the research found that there is no "common language" for curriculum. To help address this, Ofsted inspectors are testing out a new working definition of 'curriculum':

A framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and understanding to be gained at each stage (intent) …… translating that framework over time into a structure and narrative, within an institutional context (implementation) …… evaluating what knowledge and understanding pupils have gained against expectations (impact).

In practice, this means being clear on your answers to 3 key questions:

- What are you trying to achieve through your curriculum? (Intent)
- How is your curriculum being delivered? (Implementation)
- What difference is your curriculum making? (Impact)

Breadth and balance

The preliminary findings from Ofsted's curriculum review have also inspired much talk about 'breadth and balance'. In her commentary on the findings in autumn 2017, chief inspector Amanda Spielman identified 3 important issues, which she linked to the reduced understanding of the idea of curriculum:

- A narrowing of the curriculum at primary level, caused by too much of a focus on preparing for Key Stage (KS) 2 tests
- A misunderstanding of the purpose of KS3 and the new GCSE assessment criteria
- The intended curriculum for lower-attaining pupils being associated only with qualifications that count in league tables
- More recently, Ofsted representatives speaking at events have stressed that what have traditionally been thought of as 'extra-curricular activities' are part of the curriculum, and made it clear that Ofsted will reward schools for being "bold and courageous" in their curriculum offering. The latter echoes the inspectorate's 5-year strategy (2017-22), which commits to tackling practice that discourages innovation.

What does all this mean for inspections?

From September 2019, inspectors are likely to be watching out for:

- Too much of a focus on English and maths at KS2, to the detriment of the wider curriculum
- The length of your KS3 curriculum (take a look at some pros and cons of a condensed KS3); if you've shortened any non-core subjects, make sure you

HMI Peter Humphries has hinted that the inspection judgements may change to include a "quality of education" measure or similar.

have sound justification for doing so

- The range of subjects you make available, particularly for disadvantaged groups and pupils with low attainment

- In-depth knowledge of your curriculum 'whys' and 'hows' (avoid using woolly terms such as 'enrichment' and 'skills')

- Whether your stated 'intent' is translating into practice

Important points to note:

- There is no Ofsted-prescribed or "preferred" curriculum

- Curriculum is not the same thing as timetable or what qualifications you offer

- Curriculum encompasses, but is much more than, 'what will be on a test'

HMI Peter Humphries has hinted that the inspection judgements may change to include a "quality of education" measure or similar. Inspectors currently consider curriculum when assessing a school's effectiveness, but it does not have a standalone judgement.

"Clearer" focus on behaviour and pupil attitudes

The new framework will "probably" feature a judgement that focuses specifically on the behaviour and attitudes of pupils, according to a June 2018 speech given by Amanda Spielman at the Festival of Education. Ofsted "expects heads" to have "strong policies that support staff in tackling poor behaviour". They are leaning on Tom Bennett's independent review of behaviour in schools when developing the new framework. The review recommends that Ofsted:

- Conduct a national survey among both staff and pupils to capture data on behaviour in schools

- Interview non-teaching staff, such as trainees, supply staff, NQTs, administrative staff and catering staff, about school culture and practice

- Interview school leaders so they can account for the results of the surveys and interviews within their school

Ofsted have not confirmed whether these suggestions will definitely form part of the new framework, but Spielman has said they "fully support" a national behaviour survey and there is "scope" for increased dialogue with more staff.

Changes to inspection procedure and reporting

The 'Outstanding' grade is here to stay

The current 4-point grading system will remain in place, despite widespread rumours that Ofsted would move to a pass/fail system or get rid of grades altogether. Amanda Spielman announced this in her speech at the Festival of Education in June. Ofsted will keep the grading system under "regular review", but headteachers, teachers and parents widely prefer the 4-point grading system.

More frequent inspections for Outstanding schools — It is possible that 'outstanding' schools will no longer be exempt from routine inspections, following a report from the National Audit Office which identified many schools that hadn't been inspected in more than 10 years. Ofsted is actively lobbying the DfE to change the current system and include 'outstanding' schools in the normal cycle, according to reports from the BBC, The Guardian and TES.

Changes to lesson observations

Ofsted have released a report about their November 2017 seminar on international lesson observations. The report emphasises that further reflection is needed before making any changes to the current lesson inspection model. However, there are some findings that could be telling about the future of lesson observations in the UK. For instance:

- All international models have a systematic design, with a range of key criteria to measure performance. Criteria includes classroom management, clarity of instruction, and student behaviour and attitudes

- Ofsted acknowledges that 'pupils' learning' cannot be measured through a single lesson observation alone

- All models are high inference and require qualitative, subjective scoring in some way

- All observers therefore require high standards of training, carried out on a regular basis, to calibrate their judgements

- If any aspect of international lesson observation practice does make its way into Ofsted's inspection framework, The Key will update on it immediately.

Teaching & Learning

Our TEEP journey at Alcester Academy

Well, what a year - TEEP was launched! As this is the last issue of 2017/18 I thought I'd write about our TEEP journey so far, and what we have achieved as a staff and a school. I was introduced to and trained in the TEEP philosophy and approach at a previous school and this has had a profound and lasting impact on my teaching ever since. The aim of implementing TEEP at Alcester was to support and enhance the Academy philosophy; students for the most part already know how to learn, but embedding TEEP supports the development of deeper metacognition strategies. The goal is that by having TEEP philosophy at the core of teaching and learning even more students will achieve their potential or better, and will have a better understanding of how they best learn. For teachers, the goal is that TEEP will guide effective planning, will encourage collaboration, and most importantly will put excellent practice and ideas in the spotlight.

One of the main achievements of this year was to introduce the five stages of TEEP planning through creating TEEP Families. The TEEP approach is (I hope you now agree!) straightforward; you have been using its ideas for most of your teaching careers without realising it. This year has just given us all the opportunity to share our good practice, and showcase our many talents as a staff. The basic philosophy of TEEP is that students take ownership of their own learning, and become more independent learners, and at the same time we become better at thinking about learning. For me, TEEP philosophy is at the centre of my curriculum and assessment planning, areas which we will be exploring more next year. The change of Key Stage Three homework policy to be centred on 'quizzing' also has its roots in

TEEP philosophy. Another key achievement was the collaborative creation of the new lesson plan which has now been used by many staff to support appraisal-survey results revealed this to be very successful. The key to understanding how to use the new lesson plan is to remember that you don't need to have every aspect of TEEP in one lesson- an element such as review could take place at the end of a series of lessons, or could be done several times during one lesson.

The biggest change that using TEEP has had on the Academy has been the creation of the Learning Families- a big thank you to those who agreed to lead this year. From investigating Learning Outcomes to Review, every single person has thoroughly invested in their area of research. It has been brilliant to engage in such interesting and motivating discussions with colleagues from different departments, and to share ideas with people that you don't normally get much time to talk to. Implementing TEEP has rejuvenated talking about

teaching and learning, and built on the fabulous sense of community that we already have at the Academy. Sarah and I have quite simply been overwhelmed with the contributions made by colleagues this year; we have such a brilliant and talented staff who are so committed to the development of each student. It is clear that many of you have trialled your TEEP Family activities and resources, and have valued the opportunity to work with people from other Faculties. The survey results highlighted that most staff now feel confident with their part of the cycle, so much so that TEEP families will evolve to a different format next year - watch this space! For me, the highlight this year has been the creation of TEEP- driven resources- what amazing ideas and I can't wait to see these in use in the Autumn Term. The work and effort that colleagues have put in to embedding TEEP this year has been truly humbling, and I look forward to continuing the TEEP teaching and learning journey with you.
Louisa Cotterill

TEEP families will evolve to a different format next year - watch this space!

The importance of observing others teach

Lesson observations are a vital element when it comes to teaching and development; it improves teachers' own self-awareness of their skills and also makes leaders more effective at identifying areas for development. As a practising teacher, observing other lessons will allow for time to sit, observe, learn and reflect on someone else's practise and style. It will enable a focus on observation to include both positive and (dare I say it) negative aspects, techniques and styles whilst having no involvement in the lesson. More and more schools are using peer observation as a form of collaborative professional development that improves teaching practices and student performance.

Observation focuses can include questioning strategies, differentiation, use of time, behaviour management, checking for understanding, pupil engagement and participation to name just a few. Through observation and being observed teachers are given the chance to share methods, techniques, resources and also have the chance to discuss their practise and self-reflect. It is essential to use observations as a means to share and develop practise rather than associating lesson observations with performance.

It can be difficult to know exactly what to look for when observing a lesson. The guide below can help with structuring a lesson observation and assist with a more targeted focus. Having used the guide myself it has enabled me to focus my attention to specific aspects of teaching, for example, student engagement – are all pupils interested; thinking; learning; challenged? Participation strategies – are all pupils getting involved; is there a no hands policy; is questioning effective? Having a more structured guide enabled me to record the 'cause and effect' of the impact of teaching rather than a step by step of the lesson.

Teaching is the heart of what schools are for and as professionals we should always be looking to make improvements to what we do. Observation is one of the methods through which we assess the quality of teaching and learn how to develop further. Therefore, surely peer observation has to make a difference?

Olivia Nemeshanyi

Observation Look-Fors

What can coaches give teachers feedback on?

Use of Time
- Transitions from one activity to another
- Time spent with individual students or small groups
- Time spent getting lesson/class started

Strategic Questioning
- Connect to lesson target/objective
- Assess understanding
- Stretch student thinking beyond yes/no

Student Movement
- Positive: quickly transitioning, following directions, taking initiative
- Negative: getting out of seat frequently, fidgeting, interfering with others

Material Management
- Student and teacher materials organized to support flow of lesson
- Handouts are clear, meaningful and appropriate

Monitoring/Checks for Understanding
- Monitoring student progress during independent work time
- Pauses at appropriate points in lesson to check for student understanding

Participation Strategies
- Use of cold call to ensure variety of student voices
- Use of discussion protocols
- Opportunities for partner or small group collaborative work

Pacing
- Too fast, too slow?
- Time spent in each lesson component

Clarity of Presentation
- Modeling
- Clarifying
- Providing clear directions

Differentiation
- Scaffolding of lesson to meet diverse student needs

Classroom Arrangement
- Furniture placement
- Visual supports on walls
- Environment for learning
- Provision for multiple uses of space

Student Engagement
- Positive: volunteering responses, on task student-student interaction, listening, carrying out roles
- Negative: speaking out while off task, off task student-student interaction, interupting, interfering

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The Education Endowment Foundation

Following the recent circulation of the 'Metacognition' paper published by the EEF to all teaching staff, it is worth highlighting the further research offered to practitioners by them.

The Big Picture pulls together evidence from the Teaching and Learning Toolkit and EEF-funded projects which have been independently evaluated, focusing on 14 high priority issues. or themes, for schools

The themes provide greater depth to the evidence on common school challenges by linking together evidence in the Toolkit with key messages emerging from EEF-funded projects, and other resources.

Taken together, they provide a rich picture of the developing evidence base on how to improve the attainment and wider outcomes of children and young people.

These themes were developed in collaboration with teachers and school leaders in response to demand for evidence around specific school challenges.

Each section is not an exhaustive list of all the relevant EEF material, but a drawing together of the most relevant. These Themes will be updated as new EEF and other evidence becomes available.

Themes include;

Science

SEND

Post 16

Language and Literacy

Parental Engagement

Feedback and monitoring pupil progress

Developing Effective Learners

Behaviour

The EEF are currently also recruiting for schools/departments to contribute to some new research. See https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/recruiting/

What is assessment for learning?

Assessment for learning (AFL) is an approach to teaching and learning that creates feedback which is then used to improve students' performance. Students become more involved in the learning process and from this gain confidence in what they are expected to learn and to what standard.

One way of thinking about AFL is that it aims to 'close the gap' between a learner's current situation and where they want to be in their learning and achievement. Skilled teachers plan tasks which help learners to do this.

AFL involves students becoming more active in their learning and starting to 'think like a teacher'. They think more actively about where they are now, where they are going and how to get there.

Effective teachers integrate AFL in their lessons as a natural part of what they do, choosing how much or how little to use the method. AFL can be adapted to suit the age and ability of the learners involved.

AFL strategies are directly linked to improvements in student performance in summative tests and examinations. Research shows that these strategies particularly help low-achieving students to enhance their learning.

AFL and the relationship with formative and summative assessment

Traditionally, AFL has been closely associated with formative assessment because practices such as questioning and providing feedback help 'form' or 'shape' student learning. This differs from summative assessment which typically is an attempt to measure student attainment at the end of a period of learning. The following data, based on the UK's National Foundation for Educational Research report(NFER 2007), classifies types of formative and summative assessment as either formal or informal.

	Formative	Summative
Informal	Questioning Feedback Formal Assessment Peer Assessment	Portfolios Coursework (historically) Teacher Assessment
Formal	Further analysis of tests, exams, exam questions or essays	Tests Exams Essays in Controlled Conditions

It can be argued that all of the assessment strategies in this table support AFL if their ultimate use is to help the student progress in terms of their learning. A good example of using a summative assessment strategy in an AFL context is where a test or exam is used to identify a lack of understanding (e.g. in a particular area of the syllabus) and subsequently targets are set to rectify this.

There are five main processes that take place in assessment for learning:

(i) Questioning enables a student, with the help of their teacher, to find out what level they are at.

(ii) The teacher provides feedback to each student about how to improve their learning.

(iii) Students understand what successful work looks like for each task they are doing.

(iv) Students become more independent in their learning, taking part in peer assessment and self-assessment.

(v) Summative assessments (e.g. the student's exam or portfolio submission) are also used formatively to help them improve.

Teaching & Learning

What's this 'Oracy' All About Then?

Okay, so the latest buzz term in teaching seems to be 'oracy'. Every Teaching School seems to be running a course in this and nearly every flyer through my post box seems to want to advertise it. What's it all about then?

The dictionary would say that oracy is the ability to express oneself in, and understand spoken language. Work around this subject in education actually goes back years and only recently does the term seem to have generated a revival of sorts.

Oracy looks at the ability of any child to take part in 'reasoned discussion' as one method of presenting their ideas. It helps to grow articulate and confident learners whilst also fitting nicely with the concepts of metacognition and the ability for students to take ownership of their own learning.

Getting Active - How Can Action Research Help To Make You A More Effective Classroom Practitioner?

The action research process can help you understand what is happening in your classroom and identify changes that improve teaching and learning. Action research can help answer questions you have about the effectiveness of specific instructional strategies, the performance of specific students, and classroom management techniques.

Educational research often seems removed from the realities of the classroom. For many classroom educators, formal experimental research, including the use of a control group, seems to contradict the mandate to improve learning for all students. Even quasi-experimental research with no control group seems difficult to implement, given the variety of learners and diverse learning needs present in every classroom.

Action research gives you the benefits of research in the classroom without these obstacles. Believe it or not, you are probably doing some form of research already. Every time you change a lesson plan or try a new approach with your students, you are engaged in trying to figure out what works. Even though you may not acknowledge it as formal research, you are still investigating, implementing, reflecting, and refining your approach.

Qualitative research acknowledges the complexity of the classroom learning environment. While quantitative research can help us see that improvements or declines have occurred, it does not help us identify the causes of those improvements or declines. Action research provides qualitative data you can use to adjust your curriculum content, delivery, and instructional practices to improve student learning. Action research helps you implement informed change!

The term "action research" was coined by Kurt Lewin in 1944 to describe a process of investigation and inquiry that occurs as action is taken to solve a problem. Today we use the term to describe a practice of reflective inquiry undertaken with the goal of improving understanding and practice. You might consider "action" to refer to the change you are trying to implement and "research" to refer to your improved understanding of the learning environment.

Action research also helps you take charge of your personal professional development. As you reflect on your own actions and observe other master teachers, you will identify the skills and strategies you would like to add to your own professional toolbox. As you research potential solutions and are exposed to new ideas, you will identify the skills, management, and instructional training needed to make the changes you want to see.

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As an example, Shirelands Research School are currently looking at the following areas:

http://www.ocr.org.uk/about/what-we-do/supporting-education/shireland-collegiate-academy/ (See details of the 18 various projects)

An impressive range of technology enhanced projects has been developed at Shireland Collegiate Academy in the West Midlands, supported by the West Midlands Examinations Board Fund.

The 'active research' projects exemplify the Academy's approach to using digital solutions to investigate teaching and learning and have been disseminated through a network of schools and colleges across the region.

Through close collaboration in the projects, OCR's subject teams have been able to develop new resources, such as guidance on flipped learning, based on the findings of the Shireland projects, to benefit other schools and teachers.

A framework for using action learning to improve practice in your school or college

Many schools are interested in learning from other practitioners' classroom-based research, but all too often this implementation fails to replicate the impact read about in the research.

Schools lift a key concept and apply it wholesale to their cohort, thinking this approach will maximise impact whilst minimising effort.

Unfortunately this strategy usually doesn't pay off – instead, it makes teachers and education leaders cynical about the value of research.

Here, we offer some thoughts on how to approach applying principles from research in a new context.

The problem:

Too often classroom practitioners implement surface changes – providing learners with water to drink, playing music in the background during the lesson, using a particular teaching technique – without really understanding the conditions under which these changes demonstrated impact in the research, and therefore without really knowing what end result they expect from their class (or whilst expecting an entirely unrealistic impact).

The solution:

Use existing school or cohort data, or collect new data, to identify and prioritise the area(s) you want to focus on. Define the scope of your work, and articulate the problem you want to solve ('I want all my classes to behave perfectly' might be true, but a more manageable problem might be 'I want my most challenging year 10 boys to sustain their effort when faced with a tough question'). A specific group of students in a particular context will work best to start with.

We hope you'll find something in our research projects which will help with the problem you've articulated, but if not, of course there is plenty more out there to read about. You might also contact another school with a similar demographic or need, and ask them what they're doing that works. As you read, you should look for what question they were trying to answer, or what hypothesis they were testing. Think about whether this would be your question too, or whether you have a different idea in mind. Formulate your own research question, and look critically at whether the research method used will really answer that question or whether there are tweaks you'll need to make. Take time at this stage to consider how you will estimate impact and how you will determine what constitutes 'success'. Remember to consider qualitative as well as quantitative data such as student voice information, confidence measures or attendance at parents' evening, and think about what baseline measures you want to record (and how you'll gather this data) before starting your intervention. Both types of data are important – quantitative to help identify impact, and qualitative to help understand why something may or may not work.

To ensure you are able to confidently report on any impact from your intervention, it's recommended that you make a comparison between two groups of pupils where as far as possible the main difference is that one group receives an intervention and the other doesn't. It's best if any tests are anonymised and marked blind – if possible by someone who doesn't teach either the control or treatment group and so has no way of knowing which group a student is in.

Of course it's important at this point to give due consideration to ethics – particularly considering whether there might be a positive or negative impact on students involved in or excluded from the research (and how any potential negative impacts might be mitigated), as well as the need to keep student data confidential or at least anonymise it before publication, and whether consent is needed. For more detailed guidance take a look here: http://www.open.ac.uk/cobe/docs/AR-Guide-final.pdf

Carry out your investigation

You've now critically engaged with the research you want to implement, so it's time to plan for your own implementation of the research. This phase should be focused and time-bound, just long enough to give you enough evidence to evaluate the impact of the research and think about what's working or not. Plan time as soon as possible after generating evidence to take a step back and reflect on your project – ask some key questions of your data:

What's happening? Is it what I expected or not? Why/why not?

> *Should I keep going as planned, or should I try something slightly different? Is my research question still the same?*

Explore your findings

It's critical once you've completed your action research cycle to make time to engage with the evidence you've gathered, and really interrogate what it tells you. Did your project have the impact you expected? Do you know why? Was it for the reasons you expected? How do you know? You may find that you want to go back and gather some more data to check some assumptions, or you may feel it's time to extend your implementation to another group, or to get another colleague on board.

If you have information to suggest that your original objectives have not been met, do not proceed to step 5, but instead work on improving your process, or consider selecting a new strategy which might have better success. It's worth noting that if no impact is detected, this may be because the intervention isn't working in this context (possibly due to factors related to your implementation, or maybe because it's simply not appropriate in this context) or it may be that it is working, but the research hasn't managed to detect this. With small numbers in one school, this can easily happen.

Dissemination and Extending Implementation

At this stage you are moving back to the first steps again for the new contexts you are planning to implement into. This is where innovative methods can stall and end up confined to one teacher or one group of students. Make time to discuss with colleagues the steps you went through in implementing the original research's recommendations, and help them consider how they might want to move forward with their own classes. You might also need to consider whether any training is needed to secure buy-in by improving confidence. Make sure your expectations regarding implementation are clear, and create a system for monitoring this stage to secure transition into your school or college's normal working practices.

Teaching & Learning

ACTION RESEARCH

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Looking for a Summer Read?

Summer READING

TE@CHER TOOLKIT
Classroom Ideas, Teacher Training & School Resources
UK BLOG AWARDS 2018 WINNER

Summer Bookshelf 2018

https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/2018/07/08/bookshelf-2018/

What's New In Metacognition?

The Meta-Package

St John's International Academy in Wiltshire will deliver The Meta-Package, a series of lessons on neuroscience, memory and self-regulation with an accompanying language for learning present in all lessons, to year 7 pupils. They will investigate whether this intervention can increase pupil progress, especially for disadvantaged learners.

Challenge

Progress 8 data has shown that lower prior attaining pupils at the school, particularly those eligible for free school meals, make less progress than their peers (overall P8 -0.05, disadvantaged P8 -1.24). This places the school in the bottom 10% nationally in terms of progress for pupils eligible for free school meals.

Innovation

Existing evidence highlights metacognition, self-regulation and mindset as areas which can allow disadvantaged pupils to make significant progress. A teacher in the school has developed a package of interventions called the Meta-Package which includes two distinct aspects:

· A series of six lessons on neuroscience, memory, metacognition and self-regulation.

· A language for learning based on these lessons used by teachers in all lessons.

· The Meta-Package will be delivered to year 7 pupils in their tutor groups.

Watch this space for the research report
to be published in September 2018

https://researchschool.org.uk/the-meta-package/

Teaching & Learning

The LRC and Accelerated Reading

We have come to the end of a very busy year of literacy and reading, and so I thought I'd give you some statistics from the library:

During this school year 65.6% of all students and staff have borrowed something from the library. The total number of issues made this year is 6,131 - compared with 3,987 last year!!

Accelerated Reading:

Year Group	Average reading age progress in **2016-2017**			Average reading age progress in **2017-2018**		
	Non-PP	PP	Full year group	Non-PP	PP	Full year group
Current Yr 7				+ 6 months	+ 3 months	+ 6 months
Current Yr 8	+ 9 months	+ 13 months	+ 9 months	+ 12 months	+ 10 months	+ 11 months
Current Yr 9	+ 13 months	+ 18 months	+15 months	+ 9 months	+ 11 months	+ 10 months
Current Yr 10	+ 11 months	+ 4 months	+ 10 months	+ 3 months	+ 14 months	+ 6 months

Year Group	Average reading age in **2016-2017**			Average reading age in **2017-2018**		
	Non-PP	PP	Full year group	Non-PP	PP	Full year group
Current Yr 7				12yr 1month	11yr 4months	12yr
Current Yr 8	12yr 6months	11yr 6months	12yr 3months	13yr 1month	12yr 5months	12yr 11months
Current Yr 9	12yr 6months	12yr 6months	12yr 4months	11yr 5months	11yr 1month	11yr 4months
Current Yr 10	10 yr 5months	6yr 9months	9yr 11months	12yr 6months	12yr 6months	12yr 6months

Once again Accelerated Reading (AR) has continued to help students make progress with their literacy levels. 70% of **year 7** students are either at or above the benchmark for their year group. Top set **year 8** dropped AR this year, but 82% of the rest of the year group are at or are above the benchmark for their year group.

Although it appears from the results that **year 9** didn't have such a good year, the figures are slightly skewed because 99 students did AR in 2016/17, but only 38 students took part in 2017/18 – the average reading age of the 38 students was 10yr and 3months at the end of year 8 (2016/17) and so their average reading age actually increased by 1yr and 1month.

 We can see from the current **year 10** results that AR appears to have been very effective with the weaker PP readers, who, on average, have doubled their reading age! This year we increased the amount of year 10 students using AR from 8 students to 27, so this will have something to do with that increase. However, if we just look at the original 8 students their average reading age has increased from 9yr 11months last year to 10yr 4months by the end of this year.

I hope that by giving you these statistics you will understand why such a big emphasis is made on how important reading and comprehension is – reading is required to access knowledge and the need for good reading increases as the student gets older.

Accelerated Reader

Congratulations to us!

I'm delighted to let staff know that we have been successfully selected to become a Beacon School for Accelerated Reader because of our effective use of the system.
Many congratulations to everyone involved!

Google Classroom - A Logical Approach

If like me you have been in the teaching profession for a decade or so you will probably recoil slightly at the term 'Virtual Learning Environment' (VLE) or 'Intranet', for the even older amongst us. Having seen a least 3 or 4 changes in system during that period of time and having invested lots of time familiarising yourself with the functionality of the one being used by the school, as well as uploading all your resources only to come back in September to find a new system in place. So when I discovered Google Classroom I was naturally sceptical but it had a couple of immediate benefits that I could see, the main one being that (for now at least) it is free to use and also there is only a slim chance that Google are going to go out of business in the near future.

Once I started using Google Classroom and the Google suite of applications linked to it I had something of an epiphany, so rarely do you find a resource that matches with your way of thinking and that just does everything you think it should and in such a user friendly way.

Now I am coming to the end of the second school year of getting to grips with Google Classroom the whole of Performing Arts Department now make use of it for KS3 & 4 for delivering lessons and for a lot of the homework that is set too. During this time I have completed the online tutorials and become a Level 2 'Certified Google Educator'. I can highly recommend the online training if you wish to learn more, the courses are free but if you want the certificate there is s small fee and an online timed exam.

Key Features

The Google suite of applications is fairly recognisable to anyone familiar with Microsoft Office as they employ their own versions of Word (Google Docs), Powerpoint (Google Slides), Excel (Google Sheets) plus Google Forms which allow you to create quizzes and surveys. The latter we have found particularly useful when we wanted to quickly check pupil understanding of a topic, especially if you make use of the 'multiple choice' answer option that Forms will mark the quiz instantly and feedback the results to you and the pupils.

All the applications store your work automatically in your own (cloud-based) Google Drive making your documents accessible anywhere at any time. All changes are saved in real-time and, with GDPR in mind it is secure and only accessible through your own personal work username and password.

Applications

I think the best way to explain the functionality of Google Classroom is to give you some examples of the way the Performing Arts department has used it over the last year or so, some of which I hope will inspire you to have go yourself and will give you some ideas that are transferable to your own subject areas.

This a standard layout for what Google call 'Assignments' and as you can see you can give it a title, a paragraph of instructions for the pupils, a hand out date as well as a deadline and then a variety of options for how you want to present the work. I tend to use templates for most of my coursework so I have created the template using a Google Doc then attached the blank template to the assignment. Then you are presented with 3 options 1. Students can view file 2. Students can edit file 3. Make a copy for each student. Option 1 is useful if you want to just share information with pupils or give them an exemplar of the wok you want them to complete, option 2 means there is one copy of the doc for you and the pupils and you can all view and edit it, I have used this when doing group work as the group members can work collaboratively on the same doc in real time. Option 3 means that a copy is made for each student that only you and that pupil has access to, so ideal for individual pieces of coursework.
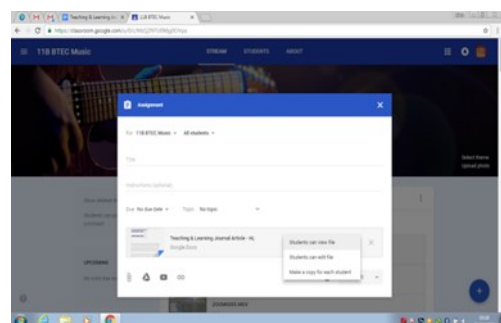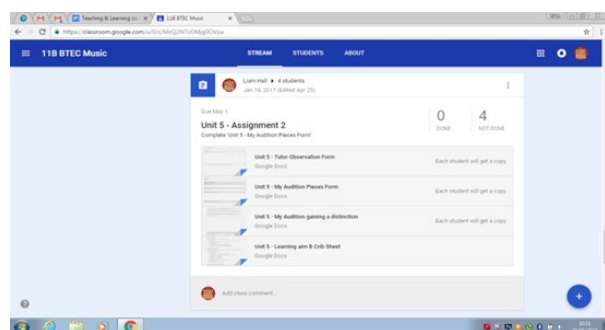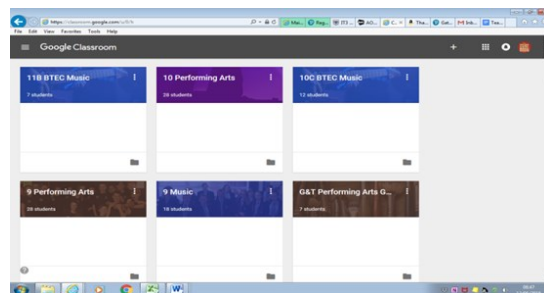
Teaching & Learning
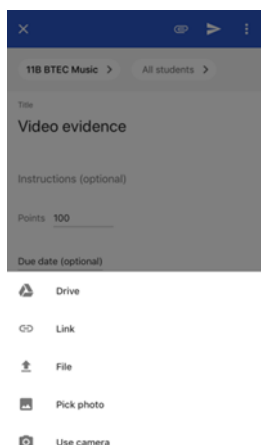
Once the work is uploaded to the assignment it cannot be lost and all changes are saved instantly, so no excuses about forgetting it as you can simply log on and have a look at how much has been completed. In terms of feedback this can be written directly onto the document itself or you can add 'comments' in the margin that relate to a particular word or sentence in the students work. If students want to add additional work and/or evidence in any form (doc, slide presentation, pdf, video, audio etc.) they can simply upload it to their assignment and you can access it.

If like mine, your subject involves a lot of practical work that can only be captured with video evidence then Google Classroom has the perfect solution. Not only can you upload previously recorded videos to assignments but with the 'app' you can use the camera on any mobile device to record video (and still images) straight to an assignment. The benefits being that they do not save to your mobile devices hard or cloud drive, so no clogging up your phone's memory or flirting with any safeguarding issues.

Google Classroom has also proved useful for KS3 as a place to keep all pupils' Assessment Booklets' as well as setting homework tasks or flip learning activities.

Future Uses

I believe we have only just scratched the surface of what Google Classroom is capable of and with the Google for Education team constantly updating the app and adding new features based on feedback from actual teachers I think it will continue to be an extremely useful tool.

One way I think we could make use of this application in future would be in helping us to deliver the tutor work and activities each week. A better option than having your emails open on your classroom screen. It would mean all the activities were there, in one place and accessible to teachers and pupils alike. Each tutor group and/or year group can have their own classroom space and pupils could be encouraged to discuss the issues raised during tutor time and ask questions about the content.

So in conclusion, Google Classroom; it's free, it's easy to use, has some great functions with more being added all the time and it just does what you expect it to do in a logical and 'teacher minded' way.

Liam Hall

Let's have a great term. I'm really looking forward to working with you! 🙂