

Embedding Formative Assessment: schools' conclusions from a two-year project

A shift from 'teaching' to 'learning'. It sounds simple. Trivial even. And yet, as these reports from the schools participating in SSAT's *Embedding Formative Assessment* project demonstrate, understanding what formative assessment means in practice entails profound changes in classroom practice.

Part of the difficulty is that the phrase 'Assessment for Learning' (big A, big L) is, in England at least, associated with particular government policies enacted in the first decade of the 21st century – the idea that schools should track student progress using ever more complicated spreadsheets that recorded the levels (and sub-levels!) that students had achieved. While such spreadsheets have a small role to play in monitoring student achievement, they are far removed from the minute-by-minute and day-by-day use of formative assessment that Paul Black and I had showed was most effective in improving student learning in our 1998 review (and summarised in *Inside the Black Box*).

Subsequent initiatives did little to help. 'Making good progress', launched in 2007, lumped 'assessment for learning' in with 'testing for progress', thus reinforcing the idea that assessment for learning was concerned with documenting students' progress rather than improving day to day classroom practice. The result of this was that many schools thought they had 'done' assessment for learning, and they were looking for the 'next big thing', even though few schools had implemented the findings of research that Paul Black and I had reviewed in 1998.

It is perhaps therefore not surprising that when Siobhan Leahy and I published the *Embedding Formative Assessment* pack in 2009, while many schools purchased the pack, the ideas in the pack were often viewed through the perspective of government initiatives. Implementation often focused

on the surface features of formative assessment rather than the fundamental shifts in practice that embracing formative assessment requires.

And this is why this report from the *Embedding Formative Assessment* project is so encouraging. As the extensive quotes from the participating schools make clear, the use of the EFA pack has resulted in deep, and, in all likelihood, lasting, changes to practice in classrooms. Teachers talk about how their practice has moved from a focus on what they are putting into the teaching and learning process to a focus on what their students are getting out of it. It is convenient to describe this as a shift in focus from teaching to learning, but in reality it is a profound change in what education is all about: increasing student engagement, and making classroom processes more responsive to student needs.

What education is all about: increasing student engagement, and making classroom processes more responsive to student needs

This is a process more than a destination, but the voices of the teachers and leaders contributing to this report show the journey is worthwhile. As long as teachers are reflecting on the relationship between what they did in their classrooms and what their students learned as a result, and as long as they see their students are partners in the learning process, the initial findings of the SSAT EFA project suggest that substantial and sustained improvements in student achievement are within our grasp.

***Dylan Wiliam
Emeritus Professor of Educational Assessment***

Welcome

Welcome to the *Embedding Formative Assessment* (EFA) end of year project report. I am delighted and proud to share this report with you. It has been a privilege to work with the schools, and I would like to thank them for their commitment, passion and enthusiasm for this project over the last two years.

At SSAT we:

- » have the interests of all young people at heart
- » empower school leaders and teachers to be autonomous and ambitious
- » are rigorous and professional
- » make considered responses to changing policy, research, markets and trends
- » bring schools together in meaningful ways.

The EFA project has provided a rich source of learning and knowledge so we too can become even better.

Corinne Settle,
Educational Lead for Teaching and Learning, SSAT

Executive summary

This report provides a summary of the reports written by schools at the end of the two-year *Embedding Formative Assessment* project. Seventy schools began the project in 2015. Over time, 10 schools withdrew from the project due to a variety of reasons. Of the 60 schools completing the project, 57 returned final reports. Schools have reported on the outcomes of the project to date including the impact on teachers, students and the wider school culture and ethos.

The timing of this report coincides with the ongoing wide-ranging changes in both the GCSE specifications and the assessment framework at key stage 4. So at this point, it is not possible – at least until the new systems are fully bedded in and teachers have become fully familiar with emerging trends and examiner practice – to predict individual student performance with any degree of accuracy. Ofsted has advised inspectors that 'It is impossible to do so [predict GCSE results] with any accuracy until after the tests and examinations have been taken, so we should not put schools under any pressure to do so – it's meaningless.' SSAT will be publishing further analysis of the project's outcomes.

The report shows that where schools have maintained the project over two years, with minor adaptations to content to fit school context, there has been significant impact. Schools have commonly reported the following changes resulting from the project:

Schools:

- » Report the effective use of formative assessment (FA) techniques day to day, lesson by lesson
- » Have seen a cultural change where teachers and students collaborate and develop a stronger sense of community, supporting each other to refine their practice.

Top five impacts of the EFA project identified by participating schools	Schools identifying
Teachers are providing feedback to move learners forward and creating a structure to enable students to act on it	48 (89%)
Teachers value the importance and impact of a wide range of formative assessment techniques on students	47 (87%)
Schools have seen a cultural change, through which teachers and students reflect on and refine their practice	46 (85%)
Students act on feedback	46 (85%)
Teachers' classroom practice of formative assessment has improved	45 (83%)

Source: 54 schools' second-year reports on the EEF EFA project

Teachers:

- » Value the importance and impact of formative assessment
- » Have improved their classroom practice, so formative assessment has a positive effect on students' learning
- » Provide feedback to move learning forward and create a structure for students to act on it.

Students:

- » Act on feedback
- » Are more engaged
- » Support each other and take responsibility for their own learning.

Each school, although following the same process and using the same content, has taken a different approach to the project overall. It is important to note that although the summary above has been widely reported across the majority of schools, these schools have also identified specific elements that they will continue to work upon in coming years. For example, feedback has been a priority for many schools, but clarifying and sharing learning intentions could need further development.

There is a clear correlation between the level of commitment schools have had to the project and its impact. Where the programme has been most effective, schools have strategically planned the project with careful consideration to the following aspects:

- » a clear vision and purpose of the programme shared with all staff
- » carefully selected school and teacher learning community (TLC) leaders, given full support from senior leadership team
- » ensuring that all organisational requirements are in place, for example, protected time and planning over the calendar year
- » a drip-drip reiterative approach to keeping the programme 'front and centre' for all staff
- » support and time for staff to peer observe, feedback to each other and for TLC leaders to meet and review sessions
- » monitoring and evaluating the project's impact over the two years, involving all stakeholders in feedback.

The project

Formative assessment can be grouped into five key strategies (Leahy, Thompson, Wiliam, 2005):

- 1. Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions and success criteria**
- 2. Engineering effective classroom discussions, activities and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning**
- 3. Providing feedback that moves learning forward**
- 4. Activating learners as instructional resources for one another**
- 5. Activating learners as the owners of their own learning.**

The big idea is that evidence about learning is used to adjust instruction to better meet students' needs. Teachers use evidence of students' understanding to make decisions about the next steps in teaching. Formative assessment is known to be effective; the difficulty lies in supporting teachers to adopt the practice successfully.

The project is a trial of a whole-school professional development programme based on *Embedding Formative Assessment*, by Dylan Wiliam and Siobhan Leahy. Dylan Wiliam launched the project at an event in September 2015. A resource pack was developed containing all the materials needed for a professional development session together with a complete set of materials for running 18-monthly follow-up teacher learning communities. Over two years the TLCs meet approximately monthly, using the agendas and resources provided. For this project, all teaching staff become members of a TLC. These 75-minute TLC meetings involve teachers feeding back on their use of techniques, new formative assessment ideas to try, and personal

action planning for the coming month. Most importantly, these professional learning conversations are followed up by action and support in the classroom through peer observation and discussion. The purpose of the EFA pack is to support teachers in **'acting their way into a new way of thinking, rather than thinking their way into a new way of acting'**. Changing teacher practice is complex; the training materials are designed to help schools address and support this challenge.

Each school has an assigned SSAT Lead Practitioner (LP) to support with the effective implementation of the EFA pack. The SSAT LP met with the school lead at the start of their project and has maintained regular contact through telephone and email conversations as well as a further face-to-face meeting at the end of year 1. Additionally schools have an online forum as a further means of sharing resources and ideas.

The impact: schools

The effective use of formative assessment techniques day to day, lesson by lesson

Schools have monitored the increasing prevalence of effective formative assessment techniques over the two-year project, collecting evidence in a variety of ways.

‘From learning walks, book reviews, pupil voice, coaching drop-ins and discussions during TLCs there is a much wider and more explicit focus on the five key strategies. There is much more focused talk about learning and learning from mistakes. This has been crucial to the development of the project through both pupils and staff. The lessons and books show much more evidence of learning from mistakes and pupils taking responsibility for identifying their own areas of weakness and developing the skills and content needed to improve.’

**Wendy Daly, Assistant Vice Principal,
Hillside High School**

Students are ‘taking responsibility for identifying their own areas of weakness and developing the skills and content needed to improve’

‘One of our most important measures of impact has been our student learning panel. This group of students were used to inform teachers of their views during the TLC meetings. They have also played a crucial part in the project’s evaluation, giving regular reviews of what is happening in the classroom. With any project, we expect our students to notice an increased incidence in the pedagogy advocated in the training. What has been different with the FA project however, is the degree to which changes seem to be permanent. Our teachers have evaluated successes in lessons and embedded these strategies in relevant department-wide innovations.’

Michael Taylor, Teacher, Middlewich High School

‘Formal lesson observations and informal learning walks provide good evidence of AfL being fully embedded in teachers’ practice. Across the departments our lessons’ learning outcomes are well framed; teachers’ feedback, both written and verbal, is more focused on promoting progress, and self and peer assessment appear to be done more effectively by our students. Teachers have moved from perceiving AfL as a set of strategies; they now see it as an approach to learning – and although this may sound axiomatic, teachers now fully recognise that the whole point of their efforts is learning.’

Patrick Cummings, Headteacher, Eckington School

A cultural change, where teachers and students reflect on and refine their practice

As at the end of year one, schools have continued to report how teachers value being given time to reflect, discuss and share their practice and expertise, which in turn develops their own thinking and supports the development of others. When asked to identify their greatest success, most schools highlight the change in the school's culture, for both students and teachers.

'Our teacher community relationships have developed in the sense that they have created an honest, pragmatic and critical discourse between the members of staff. The teachers are being challenged and questioned on the real impact that the strategies are having on the progress of the learners. This has then led to the staff becoming more self-evaluative of their teaching practice.'

**Stuart Rawle, Assistant Headteacher,
Longfield Academy of Sport**

'Without question, the greatest achievement has been the development of staff relationships and the willingness to discuss, critique, analyse and support colleagues in developing formative assessment approaches.

The structure of the TLCs will remain far beyond this programme and have already been embedded as a feature of our growing teaching school alliance CPD programme.'

**Gareth Butcher, Assistant Head,
Wilmington Grammar School for Girls**

'The project has reinstated formative assessment at the top of the toolkit for progress and impacting student outcomes. The impact on the culture/ethos is to celebrate what we do well but to feel comfortable in reflecting on and refining our practice with support and openness. It has made it clear that we can all continue to improve and that the marginal gains approach of tweaking our practice in this way means that we can embed change and maintain it.'

Clare Taylor, Department Leader, Helsby High School

'There is a new culture: consistent expectations mean students expect to improve. Teachers are talking more about teaching in the staffroom. Teachers are now prepared to question their practice and are ready for conversations about other aspects of research.'

**Dominic McKenna, Deputy Headteacher,
St. Joseph's College**

'The culture of the school is slowly changing to ensure that the students do more and the teachers do less, where deeper thinking and learning take place. With the changes to the new specifications, this will become more crucial and fundamental. As a school we will continue to press ahead with the models presented to us through this project to drive improvement forward.'

**Adele Klitou, Vice Principal,
Holy Family Catholic School**

Is formative assessment now embedded in these schools?

If we define the term embed as to fix firmly and deeply in a surrounding mass, perhaps not: schools now see this as a continual journey. As schools face constant change, whether that be in staffing, specifications or leadership, the challenge will remain. However, over the two years the schools in this project have begun to fix formative assessment into their culture and ethos at every level.

Forty-one (76%) of the schools surveyed reported that effective formative assessment techniques were being used day to day, lesson by lesson. A further 10 schools (19%) identified specific strategies that needed further embedding and refinement before they felt they could say FA was embedded.

Three-quarters of schools reported that effective formative assessment techniques were being used day to day, lesson by lesson

'So much has changed over the past two years in education that it is clear the EFA project has had a transformational impact on Sandwich Technology School. The greatest impact of this project is that formative assessment now forms an integral part of the daily teaching. It plays an important role in the development and dialogue among staff, who in turn have a greater understanding of the impact on learning. There is evidence that these small, incremental changes, for which each teacher is accountable, is effective and productive to help cope with the larger national systemic changes to the teaching profession that are out of our control. Formative assessment is the cornerstone of effective practice. The shift of having our students being able to articulate what effective and ineffective feedback looks like is significant in demonstrating their need and passion to succeed; this is a huge change in mindset from two years ago.'

Bethan Nichols, Teacher, Sandwich Technology School

All schools agree that there is and will always be more work to do to become even better.

The impact: teachers

Teachers value the importance and impact of formative assessment on their students

On embarking on this project we knew that a key challenge would be to change teachers' attitudes towards formative assessment. From something that they had 'done' previously, it needed to introduce a wide variety of techniques that should be continually practised and refined to have a positive impact on learning – bridging the 'knowing - doing' gap. However, it is also worth noting that in many cases there was effective practice that had not been identified as formative assessment: a 'doing - knowing' gap.

'The greatest impact has probably been in the attitude towards formative assessment: colleagues now really appreciate its value in moving learning forward and plan more carefully for this. And students are actively engaged in the process, acting on the feedback and taking more responsibility for their learning. Marking is increasingly done for that reason (and not to satisfy some inspectorial visitor to the classroom). Discussions, questioning, and the sharing of learning intentions and success criteria take place with the genuine understanding of their importance in that process. Simple but crucial.'

**Tim Dudgeon, Assistant Headteacher,
Chailey School**

'Staff speak with pride about some of the AfL strategies they have been using in the classroom, especially if they are strategies that they had little experience of or were unfamiliar with. What has been rewarding is the recognition of why they need to do it. This, combined with hinge point questions, has had staff having really meaningful conversations about when to move learning on and how they know.'

**Dawn Frost, Assistant Headteacher,
Colchester County High School For Girls**

'Ninety-five percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the project had helped them focus on the importance of effective formative assessment, 25% of whom strongly agreed. And 100% of respondents agreed that the workshops had helped them make positive changes to their practice, with 20% strongly agreeing.'

**Catherine Urwin, Assistant Principal,
Sir Robert Woodard Academy**

Classroom practice has improved students learning

Feedback from teachers has shown that changes in their practice has had positive impact on students' learning in lessons. Although the percentages varied in the feedback schools provided, in every case a significant majority of teachers reported this.

Ninety-seven percent said that the techniques had improved their classroom practice; 95% said that the techniques had a positive impact on student learning.

Teacher Survey by Gavin Twohig, Assistant Principal Teaching, Lambeth Academy

'All departments embraced this and in the staff survey 100% of staff stated that the two years had made impact in lessons; 74% stated a strong impact. No teachers stated little or no impact. Comments included, "I feel the strategies in the meetings have become a part of my teaching. No hands up is extremely useful at targeting students to determine their progress in lesson." This was probably one of the most popular strategies; another teacher stated, "no hands up allows me to encourage less able and shy students to interact. My culture has clearly changed in the lesson where everyone can participate".'

Steve Hodges, Associate Director of Learning, Woolwich Polytechnic School

'A survey of teachers taken at the end of the process has 79% of them reporting that they feel their formative assessment has improved since starting the project; 91% of teachers believe that FA has an impact in their lessons.'

Andrew White, Deputy Headteacher, Wirral Grammar School for Boys

'The EFA project has helped staff to improve their practice and during year two has seen 39% of teachers improve their overall teaching judgement, or to maintain as 'outstanding' teachers. Teachers now are able to reshape lessons more effectively when misconceptions have occurred. The overall percentage of 'good' or better teaching rose from 42% in September 2015 to 79% by the summer term 2017.'

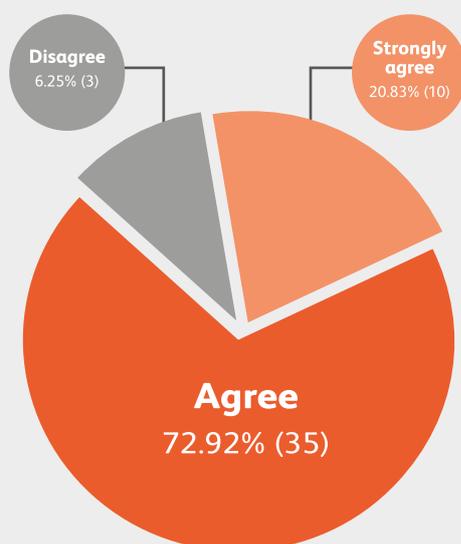
David Filmer, Deputy Headteacher, Red House Academy

'Teaching, learning and assessment now judged as good (was requires improvement in 2015). "There has been a renewed focus on improving teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Teachers have been formed into 'teaching and learning communities'; these small groups meet regularly to discuss ways to improve lessons. To complement this initiative there has been targeted training on areas such as teacher questioning and the most effective way to assess pupils' work. This has contributed to consistently good teaching across the school".'

Abbot Beyne Ofsted report, May 2017 (p3)

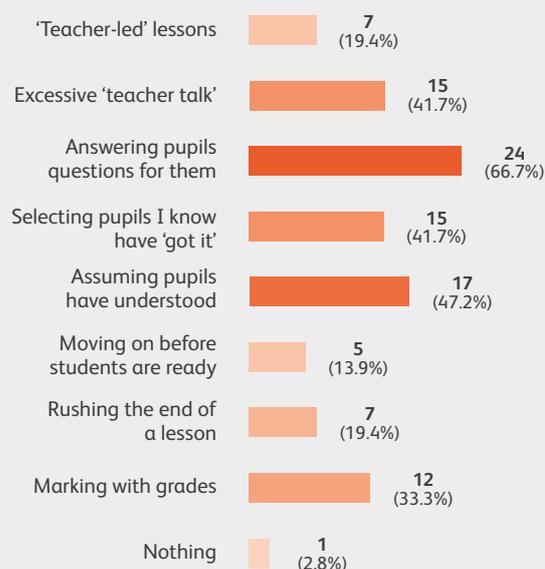
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EFA has improved my formative assessment practice



David Anderson, Deputy Principal, Uppingham Community College

What are you doing less of?



Catherine Urwin, Assistant Principal, Sir Robert Woodard Academy

Provide feedback to move learning forward and create a structure for students to act on it

Feedback and marking have been high priorities for schools due to a renewed focus on their effectiveness and the DfE Workload Challenge report (2014). Through the structure and support of the TLC meetings, which focus specifically on the purpose and effectiveness of marking, schools and teachers have taken this opportunity to review and refine what they do with an aim to reduce marking workload. Following trialling by teachers, schools have changed policies and practices at departmental and school level to meet these two aims.

‘Since we began the project, the issue of teacher workload has reached the national press... For many teachers, they associate this debate with the project and have reported that this has been a particular strength. One teacher wrote “less marking in books, more responsive teaching in lessons”. Peer assessment strategies have also proved helpful in this debate and most teachers would agree that they now provide feedback that moves learners forward. For example, one stated “I can see the power of one-to-one personalised feedback in class. I know the students much better,” and another said “Feedback has become more precise – I can detail what I want my students to do on an individual basis”.’

***Dominic McKenna, Deputy Headteacher,
St. Joseph’s College***

‘By October 2016, examples of outstanding marking and feedback have been seen in all departments. This is further supported by the most recent student voice survey, where 91% of students (653 answered) reported that they knew how to improve their learning.’

***Claire Reynolds, Assistant Headteacher,
Stretford High School***

‘In our recent Ofsted inspection, inspectors identified the changes to the academy’s assessment policy (underpinned by the EFA research and learning) as an area of strength highlighting that the academy is currently working with staff to refine the school’s assessment policy in response to the current government’s initiative to reduce teachers’ workloads. You and other senior leaders ensure that any changes introduced are underpinned by careful analysis of educational research. For example, staff have worked with a research charity which promotes the academic achievement of disadvantaged pupils in order to improve aspects of teaching and learning.’

Guilborough Academy Ofsted report, June 2017

TLC meetings on marking have enabled teachers to improve and refine practice – and reduce marking workload

‘The learning walks, book audits and lesson observations have clearly seen a marked improvement in the effectiveness of formative assessment, especially in questioning and marking. This was supported by the pupil voice, which highlighted the effectiveness of teacher feedback. Students specifically identified that across the school they were receiving consistent feedback with adequate response time.’

***Sen Galagedera, Assistant Headteacher,
Kingsford Community School***

‘The data on these marking reviews show that over 90% of formative feedback is good or outstanding and the response to this feedback from students is judged to be good or outstanding in 85% of cases.’

***Nick Salisbury, Vice Principal in charge of teaching
and learning, Sir Christopher Hatton Academy***

The impact: students

Students act on feedback

In year 2, students attend two of the TLC meetings providing feedback to teachers on success criteria and comments written by teachers. Through these sessions and the trialling of marking strategies, students have been engaged with the project to assess how feedback has helped them move forward.

‘Eighty percent of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed “the marking that I get helps me to understand how to make progress”, with 80% also noting that they are actively engaged in the feedback that they are provided with.’

Henry Gowney-Hedges, Assistant Headteacher, Guilsborough Academy

‘One of the notable impacts of the EFA has been the improvement in the consistency of good quality feedback that our students receive. Whilst this is still an area to further develop in regards to consistency across the academy, the students themselves have identified it as a strength in the school. (September 2014, 62% said the marking was useful, 71% in March 2016 and 82% in November 2016). A September 2016 HMI monitoring report also stated “Pupils are given time to reflect on the feedback they receive from teachers, which helps them to make progress”.’

Mrs Jigna Surani, Vice Principal, Kingsley Academy

‘For me, the shift to our students being clearly able to articulate what effective (and ineffective!) feedback looks like is significant, as that wasn’t the case two years ago. Their expectations of us have been raised and that can only bring about increased success for them in the future.’

Catherine Urwin, Assistant Principal, Sir Robert Woodard Academy

‘Students are no longer talking about numbers, levels and their specific target grade. They have an understanding about what they need to do specifically in terms of knowledge and/or skills. They do not have a ceiling on their achievement and through the use of formative assessment can fulfil their potential.’

Rich Gummery, Senior Assistant Headteacher, Smestow School

Formative assessment has become an ‘expectation’ now, both for staff and for students. Students expect to be asked challenging questions, expect to self/peer reflect/mark and expect to have high quality written feedback, which they are expected to respond to. And they see the benefit in doing all of this! They have become much more aware (and demanding) of what constitutes impactful feedback. Teachers have listened carefully and taken on board what the students have shared in terms of constructive feedback.

Students are more engaged

In year one, student engagement was highlighted as a leading indicator of success for the project. This engagement has been again highlighted in relation to how teachers elicit evidence of learning through questioning, whole-class feedback techniques and hinge questions.

'Findings from the pupil questionnaire show that 84% of all pupils agreed or strongly agreed that EFA strategies help them to be more engaged and help them with their learning.'

*Dwight Weir, Assistant Headteacher,
Ricards Lodge High School*

'The use of questioning has changed because the teachers are more precise and clear than before. Now, the teachers don't just pick on students who already know the answer... This makes the class participate more and it ensures that the teachers know you understand what's happening.'

'Questioning in class has changed a lot as teachers have different techniques. Teachers try and engage us to make sure that we understand our learning.'

Quotes from students at Holy Family Catholic School

'Throughout the last two years we have seen teaching staff become more efficient in the way they assess students in real time and use that information to modify their teaching, reacting to the changing needs of their students through quality wave 1 intervention as necessary, there and then.'

*Mrs G Varley, Assistant Headteacher,
Carleton Community High School*

Students in class X have been able to demonstrate a marked increase in grades when responding to feedback. It is of particular importance, given the challenging nature of the new GCSE specification

The quality of oral feedback has improved and students are more willing to give improvement advice to others constructively

Students are more willing to peer and self-assess. There is a greater focus on the need to understand their own progress

What teachers at St Philomena's said

'No hands up' in particular has kept classes alert, with particular questions targeted at individuals

Students feel they are more involved in their learning so are developing at a faster rate.

Some of the techniques have allowed the students to become more reflective

*Shared by Sophie Cabral, Assistant Headteacher,
St Philomena's Catholic High School for Girls*

Written comments from my teacher help me by...

- » allowing me to understand what I did right and what I need to improve on
- » letting me know what I need to work on and how they think I can progress and do better
- » specifically signalling how to improve
- » knowing what I can improve on in the future
- » setting me targets to improve my work and get a better grade
- » having them help me understand what they want me to do

David Anderson, Deputy Principal,
Uppingham Community College

Students support each other and take responsibility for their own learning

Students are explicitly taught how to effectively assess their own work and that of other students, giving feedback that enables them to move forward.

‘There is a shift in ownership of learning from the teacher to the student, which is impacting on student achievement and engagement. One quote from an experienced member of our staff includes the following “As we write new schemes of work to replace old ones, teachers embed the 5 AfL strategies into the planning as a matter of course” ...’

Alison Burgess, Deputy Headteacher, Eckington School

‘Peer marking has been significantly improved by more focused design of success criteria and learning outcomes, and use of annotated mark schemes, so students genuinely understand what they need to do to reach the next level. As one student commented, the real benefit comes when all aspects of feedback come together: “Not only did feedback point out some improvements it gave me some positives of my work. The three aspects, teacher, peer and self-marking all were included which gave me different perspectives to my work”.’

Jenny Hopper, Associate Assistant Head and Head of MFL, Sir William Borlase’s Grammar School

‘As a school, we have experienced a significant shift in ownership of learning from the teacher to the student, which is impacting on student achievement and engagement. Many teachers have changed their teaching practice since taking part in the *Embedding Formative Assessment* project. The questionnaire has revealed that a number of teachers have stopped answering pupils’ questions for them (16%), excessive teacher talk (15%), selecting pupils they know “got it” (13%), moving on before students are ready (13%) and marking for and with grades only (10%).’

Marta Kurylowicz, Lead Practitioner in Mathematics, The Milton Keynes Academy

‘The greatest success for me is that our pupils know where they are, know how to improve and want to do so. It has empowered them to be even better learners.’

Mrs Doward, Headteacher, Stretford High School

Year 3 and onwards

Each school has its own personal journey to take following the two-year project. As already discussed, schools have identified a specific formative assessment focus which they are taking forward into a third year, as well as other priorities. Many schools are continuing with the TLC structure due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback and desire from staff to do this. They are carefully selecting the process they wish to use, depending on the content they wish to develop.

‘The greatest impact of this programme has been the lasting way in which it will have shaped what CPD looks like, with this now focused around the way staff work together, led by other teachers, rather than by the leadership team. This will help to shape CPD as we move forwards.’

**Rachel Dooley, Assistant Principal,
Oasis Academy Coulsdon**

‘The science of teaching and learning can, at times seem complex. When we zoom out and look at the fundamentals such as formative assessment, we can simplify these complexities and then focus on the things that really matter. This project of embedding formative assessment has enabled us to do just that.’

**Gavin Twohig, Assistant Principal Teaching,
Lambeth Academy**

‘I had two hopes from this programme; one was to try and make our teaching more responsive to the needs of students, particularly in ensuring students couldn’t opt out and weren’t overlooked in lessons. The other was to try to engage teachers in talking more to each other about teaching and learning. For me the greatest whole-school success has been that not only have these objectives been fulfilled, it has established a process for CPD that is valued by teachers and has helped to provide clear next steps for feedback and teaching and learning in our school.’

**Dominic McKenna, Deputy Headteacher,
St. Joseph’s College**

The EFA project ‘has established a process for CPD that is valued by teachers and has helped to provide clear next steps for feedback and T&L in our school’

Refining the process

Many of the challenges discussed in the year 1 report remained in year 2, but schools have increasingly found ways to overcome them. For example, providing time for peer observations, as schools have found that, where these have not taken place regularly, impact has been reduced. Schools have used filming of lessons when teachers are unable to leave their own classes and then met at a later more convenient time.

Eckington School took a different approach.

‘Vouchers for release from lessons for peer coaching are being provided for all staff to allow them to work with each other on their particular/chosen focus. These vouchers give staff additional time to help and reflect on the effectiveness of a chosen technique used in lessons, and to inform the subsequent evaluation and further refinement of these approaches.’

**Alison Burgess, Deputy Headteacher,
Eckington School**

Some schools felt that the agendas used, which they characterised as a ‘one size fits all’ approach, was restrictive for some staff. In many cases as relationships developed in learning communities TLC leaders felt able to adapt the materials to suit the needs of their group. SSAT Lead Practitioners aimed to guide and support schools to do this without materially changing or distracting from the process itself. Further feedback from schools was used to increase the breadth of resources in the pack and allow individuality to flourish. An example of this would be the inclusion of more ICT-based technology and software/apps, such as the student class response systems that are now readily available.

There was a mixed response to the reiterative nature of the programme, where some strategies were revisited in year two. Some schools felt this was too repetitive, but others found it extremely valuable in getting colleagues to reconsider, and refresh techniques previously trialled.

‘The framework of working meant staff not only knew and understood the principles of effective assessment for learning, but were part of a model which was both empowering and supportive. Overwhelmingly the feedback was very positive about working together in non-hierarchical teaching and learning communities. Placing the emphasis on regularly having time to focus on assessment for learning and the understand/do/review approach has ensured that strategies have had more chance of being successfully embedded. This is a model which we will continue to use to develop aspects of teaching and learning.... Staff valued the time and space to talk to each other about teaching and learning strategies.’

**Sharon O’Donovan, Deputy Headteacher,
Sacred Heart High School**