

ROM Anthology Tasters

Assessment for learning (AfL)

How might you enhance your pupils' self-esteem and confidence?

Research evidence

Effective teachers believe in the importance of promoting pupils' self-confidence. To do this, they praise pupils, give them information about their work that highlights its positive qualities and show that they value effort. The way in which you give praise and rewards is important. Pupils of all ages appreciate positive comments written on their work, letters of congratulation sent home to their parents, and praise and encouragement in annual reports. If you make praise explicit about what the pupil has done well, not only can it make pupils feel good, it can help their learning too.

Your evidence

To find out how effectively you praise your pupils you might like to work with a colleague to observe each other's lessons, and note:

- how often you praised your pupils
- which pupils you praised
- what you praised your pupils for, and
- the words and phrases you used when praising your pupils.

Afterwards, you could discuss with each other how far your praise helped your pupils' learning.

Next steps

Now that you have a picture of the way you praise and the likely effects on your pupils' learning, you might like to work with your colleague on developing a list of different specific positive phrases you could use that would extend your repertoire. For example:

That was good because ...
Good start – can you see where you might do next?
That's a good idea – can you say why you think that might happen?
Neil's just said something helpful ...
I really like the way you ...
Well done. I know that was difficult. Maybe now you could ...
When you, I noticed how well you... Can you do it even better next time?

You could experiment with the phrases in the classroom and ask your pupils how they feel about them and how these phrases help them with their learning.

Find out more

RoM Anthology section 1, page 5, How do effective teachers promote pupils' confidence and self-belief?

RoM 26 Consulting pupils about teaching and learning:
www.gtce.org.uk/research/romtopics/rom_teachingandlearning/pupilvoice_jun05

How can we help pupils to become active learners through the feedback we give them?

Research evidence

The most effective feedback to pupils makes them think. This is best achieved by making comments that:

- identify what had been done well
- identify what still needed improvement, and
- give guidance on how to make that improvement.

Your evidence

You could reflect on your approach to marking pupils' work by examining a range of your pupils' exercise books. As you scan them, look out for the extent to which:

- your marking and feedback consists of correcting mistakes
- you point out what, specifically, is good about your pupils' work
- you offer suggestions about how the work could be improved
- you give hints or information intended to help the pupils find a solution for themselves
- your pupils revise their work appropriately, and
- your pupils appear to respond to your feedback by reducing the number of similar mistakes in subsequent work.

How effective do you feel your current marking practice is in moving your pupils' learning forward? How consistent is what you actually do with what you believe about good practice in marking work? What might be the cause of any discrepancies?

Next steps

Having analysed your current marking practice, you might like to find more ways of encouraging pupils to think for themselves how they could improve their work. Perhaps you could talk with a colleague and share ideas and strategies with them? You could explain to your pupils why you are experimenting with new approaches to marking and ask them what comments and feedback they find most helpful.

Find out more

RoM Anthology section 2, page 18, 'How can you mark work so as to improve pupil attainment?'

RoM 19 Assessment for learning, putting it into practice:

www.gtce.org.uk/research/romtopics/rom_teachingandlearning/afl_sep04

How can you mark work in ways that will motivate pupils to improve?

Research evidence

Putting marks or grades on pupils' work provides them with a judgement about their performance, but doesn't show them how they could improve it. Awarding marks and grades emphasises competition and tends to discourage pupils who do relatively badly. When the classroom culture focuses on rewarding high quality work and emphasising pupils' relative position in the class, pupils may look for ways to obtain the best marks and avoid putting themselves in situations where they might fail. Low achievers may give up trying altogether.

Comments-only marking appears to motivate pupils of all abilities and produces gains in learning and achievement. However giving marks alongside comments is likely to wash out the beneficial effects of the comments. The kind of comments that are most effective at helping pupils to learn are ones that challenge pupils to think and improve their work.

Your evidence

You might like to work with a group of pupils from your class and discuss with them examples of some assessments that you have made. You could look in particular at any comments and corrections that you made on their written work and find out from your pupils how they felt about your responses and their work. Can they explain how their revised work is better?

Next steps

How could you go about ensuring that when you give pupils feedback that challenges their thinking that they feel positive about it and understand clearly how they can improve? Could you work with your pupils to negotiate criteria with pupils by which their work will be evaluated? Perhaps some pupils could complete learning logs in selected lessons so that you and they could explore connections between how they felt in lessons and your comments?

Find out more

RoM Anthology section 2, page 18, How can you mark work so as to improve pupil attainment?

RoM 19 Assessment for learning, putting it into practice:

www.gtce.org.uk/research/romtopics/rom_teachingandlearning/afl_sep04