Assessment for Learning
Supporting change in schools
Pulje 5, 15 March 2016

Gordon Stobart
Emeritus Professor of Education,
Institute of Education, University College London
What do we know about change?

- It’s hard – New Year Resolutions, changing organisations
- It’s about hearts and minds, goals and the next steps
- School change is about small steps – marginal gains
- The environment needs to change if individuals want to change
Change is difficult

Chip & Dan Heath *Switch – How to change things when change is hard* (2011)

Three surprises about change:

1. Change is difficult because the self-control needed is an exhaustible resource (we’ve only so much of it) for example starting a new job and what looks like laziness could be exhaustion.

2. What looks like resistance is often lack of clarity – ‘eat a healthier diet’ – 1% milk – change purchasing behaviour
Change is difficult – especially of organisations and their cultures

- Health service and airline approaches to safety
- Organisations that failed to change: Kodak; Motorola

How much do we put teachers behaviour down to ‘the way they are’ rather than ‘the situation they’re in’? (TV Supernanny; Dog trainers etc.)

[ The *Fundamental Attribution Error* (Lee Ross)]

How willing to change are our schools? What are the ‘levers’ of change?
2. Resistance to change even when the evidence and experience warrant it, for example:
   - leaving 'comfort zone' (Norway: fewer professional development days; highest rating of self-efficacy)
   - TALIS workload implications (union objections)
   - change being imposed (top-down policy)

3. School cultures (Stoll, 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Improvement</th>
<th>High Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Attainment</td>
<td>Cruising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Attainment</td>
<td>Improving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vibe et al. 2009
Are teachers’ views changing in Norway?
TALIS 2013 – Teacher self-efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Norway %</th>
<th>TALIS average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get students to believe they can do well in school work</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help my students value learning</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft good questions for my students</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>87.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivate students who show low interest in school work</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help students think critically</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a variety of assessment strategies</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide an alternative explanation when students are confused</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement alternative instructional strategies in my classroom</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Change: It’s about hearts and minds

‘In highly successful change efforts people find ways to help others see the problems or solutions in ways which influence emotions, not just thought’ (Kotter & Cohen)

• This is at the centre of school improvement (Fullan & Hargreaves)

• We know what we should be doing (mind) so is it more about hearts??

Do most Norwegian teachers know about AfL? Do most put it into practice on a daily basis?

Ways to motivate:
Search out the bright spots and build on them
Use ‘early adopters’ and enthusiasts to model
The ‘see-feel-change’ model rather than the ‘analyse-think-change’ model
We know what we should be doing

The new regulations in the Education Act are founded on four key principles for effective formative assessment, namely that pupils learn best when they:

1. Understand what they are supposed to learn and what is expected of them;
2. Receive feedback that informs them about the quality of their work or performance;
3. Receive advice on how they can improve;
4. Are involved in their own learning activities for example through assessing their own work and development.

(Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2011)
Change: Goals and the next steps

• Develop a clear goal – the *Destination Postcard*

• ‘Shrink the change’ – achievable next steps – avoid ‘decision paralysis’

‘When you achieve a little each day, eventually big things occur’ (John Wooden)

‘Marginal gains’ (Sky Cycling Team; 5 minute room rescue; AA - One day at a time)

Seeing progress (look for small positive progress)
A destination postcard?
John Hattie’s *Visible Learning*

**Transparent goals**
- the more transparent the teacher makes the learning goals, then the more likely the student is to engage in the work needed to meet the goal.

**Success criteria**
- the more the student is aware of the criteria of success, then the more the student can see the specific actions that are needed to attain these criteria

**Rapid formative feedback**
- the more there is feedback about progress from prior to desired outcomes the more positive attributes to learning are developed
Learning Intentions – specific steps
Separate the learning from the task

Doing this makes it easier to differentiate instruction without creating a classroom in which different students are working towards different goals.

All students are working towards the same learning intention; the differentiation comes in the success criteria – how far are students able to transfer their learning?

All students should be able to transfer what they have learned to very similar contexts while others can be challenged by assessing how far they can transfer what they have learned.

(Dylan Wiliam)
Success criteria – specific steps
Help pupils understanding what is needed

1. Negotiation: ‘what would you expect to see in a successful piece of work?’
2. Exemplars: ‘which of these two (or more) pieces of work best meets the criteria?’
3. Modelling: ‘Here’s what I mean...’
4. Guided practice: activity > independent practice (the teacher as sports coach)
   
   Practice at least six times
Success criteria – practising what is needed

• Scaffolding
  – Provide a first attempt for the students to show what they know.
  – Give informal feedback
  – Have students identify the next step
  – Provide an opportunity for a second attempt to reach the goals, using the chosen next step.

  (based on Clarke, Owens & Sutton)

(active, making sense, choice, practice, self-assessment)
A destination postcard?
John Hattie’s *Visible Learning*

**Transparent goals**
- the more transparent the teacher makes the learning goals, then the more likely the student is to engage in the work needed to meet the goal.

**Success criteria**
- the more the student is aware of the criteria of success, then the more the student can see the specific actions that are needed to attain these criteria.

**Rapid formative feedback**
- the more there is feedback about progress from prior to desired outcomes the more positive attributes to learning are developed.
Feedback that closes the gap

‘Provides information which allows the learner to close the gap between current and desired performance’

*It is most effective when:*

• It is effectively **timed** and is **specific** and **clear**;
• It is clearly linked to the learning intention;
• The learner understands the success criteria/standard;
• It focuses on the **task** rather than the learner (self/ego);
• It gives cues at appropriate levels on how to bridge the gap;
• It offers **strategies** rather than solutions;
• It **challenges**, requires **action**, and is **achievable**.
Steps for effective feedback
Specific, informative, well-timed and task focused

‘In Norway feedback tends to be general and unspecific, consisting mainly of praise, and consequently, there is a lack of feedback on how to proceed with learning’

• ‘write more’ – ‘If I knew more I would have written it – I don’t know what more to write. Teachers should tell me what is missing’ (14 yr old Norwegian pupil)

• When pupils are not given time to act on the feedback they see it as negative and critical which makes them feel ‘useless’. If the are given time and the teacher follows up on the feedback it is treated as positive.

(Gamlem and Smith)
Another Destination Postcard
Keeping our students active learners

• Learning as active, meaning making process
• Have in-depth discussions
• Negotiate success criteria
• Practise self- and peer- assessment
• Encourage self-regulation
The self-regulated learner: The goal of Assessment for Learning

‘The true test of intelligence is not how much we know how to do, but how we behave when we don’t know what to do’ (John Holt, How Children Fail)

‘What the student does is actually more important in determining what is learned than what the teacher does’ (Thomas Shuell)

‘Learners must ultimately be responsible for their learning since no-one else can do it for them’ (Assessment Reform Group)
Learners as questioners

Once you have learned to ask questions – relevant and appropriate and substantial – you have learned how to learn and no one can keep you from learning whatever it is you need to know. (Postman and Weingartner, Teaching as a Subversive Activity)

Why do our pupils ask so few thoughtful questions? Why do they ask fewer as they get older?

- Written questions
  - Question box / ‘Hold on miss I’ve got a question’ board/ Exit questions
- Role play – interview the expert
- Don’t know the answer – please research
- Groups write test questions for others in class at end of a topic
Encouraging self-regulated learning

1. **Create favourable learning environments**: ‘safe to take risks’, high expectations, ‘personal bests’

2. **Make the learning meaningful**: relevance, ‘tuning in’

3. **Help learners be clear about goals of learning** – ‘know where they’re going’ – making sense

4. **Show learners they can manage the learning** – ‘sweet spot’; zone of proximal development (zpd), don’t ‘over-help’

5. **Encourage positive motivation and emotions** - learning under control (effort and strategies), source of pleasure and pride

6. **Help learners cope with negative emotions** – coping strategies, reduce performance anxiety or boredom, modelling, reduce arousal

(source: Boekaerts)
Change: Smooth the path

• Get leaders to ‘buy into’ the changes
• Offer group support and professional development
  – Regular meetings – honest discussion (success and failure)
  – Provide information
  – Give specific choices
  – Build on good practice
  – Develop group accountability
TALIS 2013 Views on teacher professional development

‘Teachers, school leaders and policy makers should prioritise professional development activities that take place in school settings and that are sustained, collaborative, and focused on problems of practice’

‘Countries that wish to improve the effectiveness of professional development provided to teachers should increase the amount and variation of school embedded offerings such as mentoring and coaching, creating networks of teachers who learn together, and supporting collaborative research and instructional problem solving by teachers.’

OECD Teaching in Focus 10 (2015)
What we know about successful implementation of Assessment for Learning

*Content*
1. There is a sound understanding of the principles of AfL
2. There is clarity about AfL classroom practices

*Processes*
1. Give choice on what to develop
2. Encourage teachers to modify AfL to suit their classrooms
3. Take small steps – teacher change is slow
4. Provide support
5. Develop a sense of accountability

(Dylan Wiliam)
Teacher Learning Communities: A proposed meeting schedule

• Frequency: about once a month?
• Introduction (5 mins) - agendas circulated
• Starter activity (5 mins) – to help ‘tune in’
• Feedback (25 mins) – report back on what each teacher tried out & how it went
• New learning about AfL (20 mins) - speaker/book study/video
• Personal action planning (15 mins)
• Summary of learning (5 mins) – met learning intentions?

(Dylan Wiliam)
How has my own thinking changed since 2014?

More emphasis on:

1. *Subject knowledge* – what is learning progression in my subjects? What are the sticking points? Research lessons; simple explanations; telling stories

2. *Deliberate practice* – drills for basic skills and facts; importance of ‘working memory’; getting it 100% right

3. *Better modelling & more rapid feedback* – ‘here’s what we’re doing’ – sports coaching
The AfL school

1. Focuses on learning with understanding
2. High expectations from leaders and teachers
3. High cognitive demand in classroom
4. Risk taking – classrooms that are ‘safe to take learning risks’
5. Classroom assessment that encourages deep learning:
   - Good diagnostics & active dialogue
   - Clear learning goals/success criteria
   - Expert feedback - task based, informative, challenging
   - Self and peer assessment – self-regulated learners