Assessment for Learning
Supporting change in schools
Group 6, 17 Jan 2017

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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 / getting fit 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;

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?
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

https://tmsydney.wikispaces.com/
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)
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)

Doug Lemov – Why don’t teachers practise?
A destination postcard?
John Hattie’s *Visible Learning*

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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)
A teaching Destination Postcard

- Increase expectations and set challenging goals
- Encourage a growth mindset – focus on the task
- Develop subject knowledge
- Improve the quality of practice
- Reflect on teaching and seek feedback
Self versus task related feedback: Carol Dweck’s experiment (1)

400 11 year olds given a series of simple puzzles
Each student given score plus six words of feedback:
  half praised for intelligence ‘you must be smart at this’ and half for effort ‘you must have worked really hard’

Students then given choice of whether to take an easy or hard test.
  - Two thirds of intelligence group chose easy one
  - 90% of effort group chose hard one

Students then given test so hard that none succeeded
Self versus task related feedback: Carol Dweck’s experiment (2)

Group praised for intelligence interpreted failure as proof they were no good at puzzles after all
Group praised for effort persevered longer, enjoyed it more, and did not suffer any loss in confidence
Students then had chance to do test of equal difficulty to the first one: intelligence group showed a 20% decline in score, effort group a 30% increase
Kinds of practice – Anders Ericsson

• **Naïve** –
  repeated practice in hope we will get better. ‘Have fun’ practising. Limited improvement.

• **Purposeful**
  Well designed, specific goals ‘play the piece all the way through at the proper speed three times in a row’.
  Focused practice (risk of ‘try harder’ rather than ‘try differently’)
  Involves feedback – can’t improve without it
  Have to leave comfort zone (problem for doctors & teachers?)

• **Deliberate** – applies to well-developed field (recognised experts) & needs a teacher
  Outside comfort zone – not fun
  Well-defined, specific goals
  Needs concentration on specific goal
  Involves feedback and modification of efforts in response
 Requires effective mental frameworks
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)
Growing change: Louise Hayward

The funded *transmission model* is coming to a close
- Resource and marketing models
- Large-scale Cascade model (has the water reached the classroom?)

The *transformation model*
- Communities working together
- Deciding what’s important
- Working out how to get there (eg Assessment Reform Group)
- You are the experts now
A final postcard: 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