

Assessment at Cambridge Road

Cambridge Road's 8 Key Formative Assessment Strategies

High engagement classrooms

- High-engagement classroom environments appear to have a significant impact on pupil achievement. So, when teachers allow pupils to choose whether to participate or not (for example by allowing them to raise their hands to show they have an answer) they are actually making the achievement gap worse, because those who are participating are getting smarter, while those avoiding engagement are forgoing the opportunities to increase their ability. So instead of hands up, use lolly sticks!
- If pupils still resist engagement by responding with “I don’t know” the teacher should respond by saying “Ok; I’ll come back to you.” Then go around the class and get a number of responses to the question and then go back to the original pupil and say “Now which of those answers do you like best?” If nothing else this emphasise that this is a classroom in which there are no opt-outs.
- Other possibilities that support the pupils without letting them off the hook are allowing them to “phone a friend” or “ask the audience” or go “fifty-fifty” – all these strategies derive their power from the fact that classroom participation is not optional.

Bounce before you pounce!

- When asking questions that require thought, increasing the time between the end of the pupil’s answer and the teacher’s evaluation from the average wait time of less than a second to three seconds produces measurable increases in learning.

Learning partners

- The quality of discussions are usually enhanced further when pupils are given the opportunity to discuss their responses with ‘learning partners’ or in small groups.

All student response system

- If teachers are to harness the power of high-quality questioning to inform their next steps, they need to use all-student response systems routinely. The idea of an all-student response system is very simple: the teacher asks a question in such a way that allows him or her to get a response from every pupil in real time. Good ways of doing this include the use of ABCD cards, mini whiteboards or exit passes.

Nose for quality

- Ensuring that all pupils know what quality work looks like has a profound impact on achievement gaps. Helping the pupils develop a 'nose for quality' will make them aware of the gap between where they are and where they want to be.
- Help pupils understand success criteria by getting them to look at samples of other pupils' work and to engage in a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of each. Pupils tend to be much better at spotting errors and weaknesses in the work of others than they are in their own. Once pupils have pointed out such errors, they are more likely to avoid repeating them in their own work.

Peer assessment

- Pupils can play an important part in the learning of their peers. Indeed when the help takes the form of elaborated explanations, both those giving and getting help benefit. In fact the benefit can be especially great for those giving help, producing at least a 50% increase in the rate of learning.
- A simple technique for getting started with peer assessment is 'Two Stars and a Wish' – the pupil has to find two things they think were good about the work and a suggestion for improvement.

Self assessment

- "Traffic lights" can be used to activate pupils as owners of their own learning. At the end of a session pupils have to assess the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning by placing a coloured circle against the learning objective that they wrote in their book at the start of the lesson. To improve upon this further one might say to the class – "Reds over here with me, greens help the yellows and yellows make sure the greens understand this as well as they think they do."
- The "traffic light" system can also be used during the lesson to provide the teacher with real-time information. By using coloured discs the pupils can indicate their understanding or lack of it. To take this idea a step further on, it can become the rule in the class that as soon as a pupil shows a red disc, the teacher uses lolly sticks to pick out the name of another pupil to answer the question being posed by the pupil who showed red. This technique neatly encapsulates two key components of effective formative assessment – engagement and contingency. If a pupil is showing yellow or green, they can be called upon to explain the work to someone else, which requires the pupils to be monitoring their own learning and thus to be engaged.
- Another effective way of getting pupils to reflect on their learning is to ask them to complete a learning log at the end of a lesson. Providing the pupils with the following questions and getting them to respond to two or three encourages a more thoughtful approach to the process of reflecting on their learning. The questions are –

Today I learned –

I was surprised by –

The most useful thing I will take from this lesson is –

I was interested in –

What I liked most about the lesson was –

One thing I'm not sure about is –

The main thing I want to find out more about is –

Feedback

- The overriding purpose of marking and feedback is to increase pupil learning.
- We should strive to give feedback that causes a cognitive rather than an emotional reaction – feedback that causes thinking. Feedback should be focused; it should relate to the learning goals that have been shared with the pupils. It must provide a recipe for future action and be used by the learner to improve performance.

Cambridge Road's 7 Key Marking Strategies

The following strategies for marking are to be used by all staff. They are based on the work of Dylan William combined with what experience tells us works. Some of the strategies can be used by the teacher/teaching assistant (T), some can be used by a peer (P) and some are appropriate for self-assessment (S).

'Two Stars and a Wish' (T, P, S):

The two stars are the pleasing pieces of the work. The wish (W) is the next step/way forward.

'Three Questions' (T, P):

Up to three questions to be written at the bottom of the piece of work which promote thinking and encourage learning.

The child must respond to the questions before starting the next piece of work.

'Mix and Match' (T):

The teacher's comments (could be in the form of 'Two Stars and a Wish') are written down on strips of paper. The strips are then given to the table and the children must work out which strip belongs to which child, thereby promoting thought.

'Find It, Fix It' (T):

This is particularly good for maths marking. The teacher informs the child how many are incorrect, the child has to find which ones were wrong and correct them.

'Margin Marking' (T):

Similar to 'Find It, Fix It' but this time it is good for marking writing. The teacher indicates in the margin where there are things that need addressing. Also lends itself to differentiation as more able can just have an arrow or a dot whilst less able could be guided by 'g' for grammar, 'p' for punctuation, 's' for spelling.

'Traffic Lights' (T, P, S):

See Assessment Information System for colour coding.

'Checklist and Wish' (T, P, S):

This is particularly good for marking writing. The specific genre checklist is marked and a next step (T for Target) is added to enhance the learning.