



Teaching & Learning Bulletin

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Enriching Teaching Practices: From AfL to Action

Introduction: A Recap of the Previous Newsletter and AfL Inset Pack

In our previous newsletter, we explored practical strategies like metacognition, retrieval practice, and think-pair-share, all designed to support responsive teaching. This month, we dive deeper into Assessment for Learning (AfL) and the vital role feedback plays in driving instructional improvement and student outcomes. The Assessment and Feedback INSET pack you recently received offered a foundation for integrating formative assessment strategies into your daily practice. Now, it's time to take these insights further, turning AfL and feedback into routines that lead to lasting impact across your school.

By focusing on embedding formative assessment and meaningful feedback into daily lessons, we can create a culture of continual improvement—both for students and teachers.

Teaching and Learning INSET Pack Term 1:

- How have you used the INSET training resources we sent this term?
- What follow-up have you done with teachers so far?
- What have you seen working well?
- What should teachers stop doing, continue doing, and start doing to improve their practice?

Embedding Feedback and AfL Strategies into Daily Practice

Making Feedback an Everyday Routine

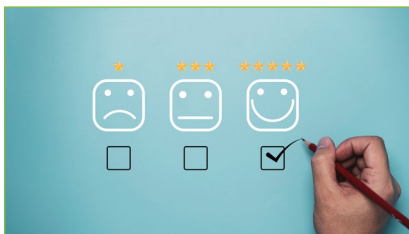


Feedback should not be an event, but rather an integral part of the learning process. When done well, feedback acts as a bridge between what students understand and what they need to work on. But how do we make feedback actionable and frequent without overwhelming teachers and students?

Strategies for Embedding Feedback:

- 1. Exit Tickets and Checkpoints:** Build mini-assessment opportunities into your lessons, such as exit tickets or quick quizzes. These tools provide teachers with immediate insights into student understanding, allowing you to adjust your teaching on the fly. For more ideas, revisit the AFL strategies we shared with you and have added to the membership dashboard. I like to use the exit ticket to show progress against the learning objectives, closing the learning loop. I also often use open-ended prompts to encourage meta-cognitive reflection: summarise today's learning; ask 3 questions about today's learning; what one thing do you want more help with are my favourites.
- 2. Mini Whiteboards:** Use mini whiteboards to ask questions and check for understanding. This is a simple but powerful way to embed real-time feedback and ensure every student is engaged in thinking and participating.
- 3. Live Marking:** Where possible, mark students' work during the lesson. This allows for instant feedback and the opportunity to correct misconceptions before they take root. Personally, I use my visualiser every lesson! As an alternative, I used to take photos of work and then upload them to my laptop in order to display work to the rest of the class.

Peer and Self-Assessment for Student Ownership



Peer and self-assessment offer powerful ways for students to take ownership of their learning. It encourages metacognition, prompting students to reflect on their understanding and develop their critical thinking skills. I make sure that students are fluent in the assessment objectives and level descriptors which make this process much easier. Again, I like to model this process with the visualiser until the students get used to it.

Practical Tip:

- 1. Two Stars and a Wish:** Encourage students to evaluate their own or their peers' work by offering two strengths and one area for improvement. This builds a habit of reflection and peer feedback in a low-stakes environment.

Embedding formative assessment into daily practice is a manageable and effective way to ensure that students are receiving regular feedback and that teaching is responsive to student needs. In short, formative assessment allows us to work out what students know so we can work out what to do next. Done right, it also allows students to take ownership of their own study. Finally, it allows students to become fluent in assessment language, a crucial part of exam success for top-achieving students.

Feedback to Forward Action - Making it Meaningful

Feedback for Growth, Not Just Grades



Feedback should propel students forward, helping them understand not only what they need to improve but also how to improve. Feedback should guide the next steps and empower students to take action. Whether it's through targeted written feedback, verbal comments, or rubrics, meaningful feedback bridges the gap between current performance and future potential. Although students don't like it at first, I never mention grades in feedback. The second I do, it is all they can think and talk about.

Responsive Teaching in Action

Responsive teaching is a process of adapting instruction in real-time based on continuous assessment. Instead of waiting for a formal test or assessment to identify learning gaps, responsive teaching allows teachers to make immediate instructional adjustments.

How to Give Forward-Focused Feedback:

- 1. Be Specific:** Avoid generic comments like “Good work” or “Try harder.” Instead, focus on specific actions the student can take: “You used strong evidence here, but you can improve by analysing the source more closely.”
- 2. Feedforward:** Shift from looking back at what students did wrong to focusing on what they can do next. Give students a clear action step for how to move forward in their learning.
- 3. Timeliness Matters:** Ensure feedback is given soon after the task so students can act on it while the learning is still fresh.
- 4. Praise effort and learning;** not ‘work’ and outcomes.

Practical Tip:

- **Actionable Next Steps:** Always follow feedback with a specific next step for the student. This might involve revisiting a particular part of the lesson, practising a skill, or completing a follow-up task to demonstrate improvement.

Sustaining AfL Practices for Long-Term Impact

Making AfL Sustainable and Embedded

To have long-lasting effects, AfL practices need to be sustainable and part of the daily teaching culture in your school. Sustainability in AfL means that these practices become routines—seamlessly integrated into every lesson and part of your school’s ethos. Once they are routine, it really does reduce the cognitive load for teachers and students alike!

Tips for Creating Sustainable Routines:

- 1. Start Small:** Don’t try to implement every AfL strategy at once. Start with two or three manageable strategies (like exit tickets or peer feedback) and build from there.
- 2. Collaborate and Share:** Encourage collaboration among teaching staff. Share successes, challenges, and strategies during staff meetings or teaching and learning communities (TLCs).
- 3. Use Technology:** Embed educational technologies like Google Forms, Quizizz, or Microsoft Teams to automate quizzes, provide instant feedback, and track student progress. This can then be used to identify gaps in knowledge or for retrieval practice and spaced repetition.
- 4. Ongoing Professional Development:** Keep AfL practices alive through ongoing professional development. Ensure that staff have regular opportunities to refine their AfL skills and share best practices.

School-Wide Support and Leadership

For AfL practices to thrive, school leadership must prioritise them as part of the broader school improvement strategy. Leaders should actively support AfL through professional development opportunities, monitoring, and providing feedback to teachers on how well AfL is being implemented in their classrooms. Visible leadership is an essential ingredient of successful implementation.

Changing a whole-school culture is notoriously difficult. Focussing on one technique at a time and giving teachers plenty of models and time to practice is crucial. Then, low-stakes feedback will allow them to make rapid progress before moving on to the next technique.

Summary



- 1. Start with three AfL Strategy:** Pick two or three manageable strategy like exit tickets or peer feedback and make it a daily or weekly routine.
- 2. Set Specific, Actionable Goals for Feedback:** When giving feedback, always include a specific action step the student should take to improve.
- 3. Leverage Technology:** Use platforms like Quizizz, Google Forms, or Microsoft Teams to make quizzes and feedback more efficient and manageable.
- 4. Collaborate with Colleagues:** Use TLCs or staff meetings to share strategies, success stories, and challenges with formative assessment.
- 5. Monitor and Reflect:** Regularly check in with yourself and your students about how well AfL strategies are working. Don't be afraid to make adjustments.

By starting small and focusing on actionable strategies, you can ensure that AfL practices are embedded and sustainable for the long term. And don't forget—Veema Education is here to provide additional CPD and support as you continue this journey.

Planning Your CPD Workshop, Seminar, or Inset Day

Based on the information in this bulletin, here are some key questions to consider as you plan your CPD event:

- What specific information or strategies will you include into your workshop, seminar, or inset day?
- What short-term, instant gains do you want teachers to take away?
- How will you know they have learned something new that will enhance their teaching practice?
- When will you schedule a follow-up to review progress? We recommend reviewing within 4 weeks. Consider planning a Part 1, Part 2, or even Part 3 to ensure continuity and deeper learning.
- Encourage teachers to provide feedback to each other during departmental and whole-staff meetings. As senior leaders monitor this process by having SLT members attend faculty meetings.

These are just some ideas to get you started and thinking ahead.

Further reading

- Embedded Formative Assessment: Dylan William
- Why Don't Students Like School: Daniel Willingham
- Responsive Teaching: Cognitive Science and Formative Assessment in Practice: Harry Fletcher-Wood

A Spotlight on this term's resources:

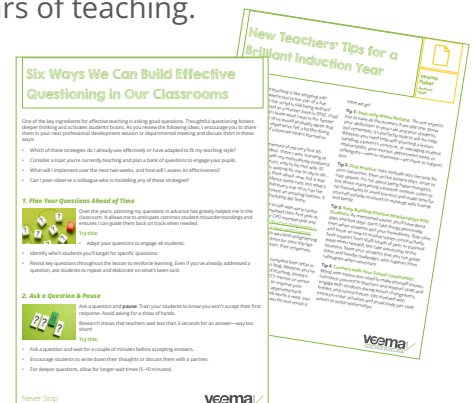
Paper: In his recent blog, Costas Constantinou shares a concise paper featuring tips and insights from Early Career Teachers on what helped them thrive in their first two years of teaching.

'New Teachers' Tips for a Brilliant Induction Year.'

Read it here...

Lisa Jane Ashes Webinar: 'Reflections on my Classroom Practice insights from My Teaching Journey'.

Six Ways We Can Build Effective Questioning in Our Classrooms.



Conclusion

Assessment for Learning and feedback are more than just strategies; they are key drivers of student progress and teacher development. By embedding feedback into daily practice, making it meaningful, and sustaining these strategies over time, schools can create a culture of continuous improvement. We encourage both teachers and school leaders to take these steps forward, reflect on their practices, and ensure that every student benefits from ongoing, meaningful assessment.

As always, Veema Education is here to support you in embedding these strategies into your school culture. Together, we can create lasting, impactful changes in teaching and learning.

Thanks for reading! If you have any questions about anything in this bulletin or the resources on the dashboard, feel free to email us at cpd@veema.co.uk.

Take care,



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