

Activating students as owners of their own learning

- **Concept list:** Students 'traffic light' a list of concepts in terms of whether they understand them well, need a little help or need a lot of help.
- **End-of-lesson summary:** A student provides a summary of what the whole class was expected to learn during a lesson.
- **Question strips:** Students write questions about anything they want more information about or that they are unclear about. The teacher then reads through the questions, answers the main themes and alters future teaching if needed.
- **Evaluation with marking schemes:** Students check their own work against a marking scheme so that they can internalise the characteristics of good work.
- **Sharing exemplars:** The teacher uses student work from another class, previous year or a teacher mock-up to share with current students.
- **+/-/interesting charts:** Students write on a flip chart what was positive, negative or interesting about a lesson.
- **Learning tree:** Learners write/have scribed for them questions they would like answered and at some point the teacher...
- **Learning portfolio:** This technique works for any task that the children undertake regularly but not frequently. For example, the children may do a self-portrait once a month, which is then placed in the child's portfolio. After four or five months, the child is asked to look back over the self-portraits they have completed, and asked to talk about what has got better in their drawing or painting.
- **Gots and needs:** Students write on a post-it note or card something they understood (got) about the lesson and/or something they still do not understand (need).
- **Homework help board:** Students identify homework questions they struggled with, put them on the board and solve them for one another.
- **Parking lot/learning tree:** Students place questions (either written or scribed) that they need answered on a 'parking lot'. The teacher or member of class answers them for the students.
- **One small change:** Rather than giving children feedback about what they need to do to improve a piece of work, ask them to think about one small change that they could make in a piece of work to make it better. Do not require the child to make that change (unless the child wants to of course). It is the reflection, not the action that is important here.
- **Students write the questions:** Students develop questions to deepen their own understanding of the topic being studied.

- **Plan-do-review:** This is a technique from the “High/Scope” approach to teaching in the early years (www.highscope.org). Each work session begins with a short period in which each child plans what to do during the session (where they want to work, what materials they want to use, and who they want to work with). There then follows a longer period for the child or children to carry out their work plan, followed by a short period for review. As the teacher or assistant reviews the activity with the child, the child can be encouraged to make their own record of the review at the same time. A particularly useful technique is to have a small white board at child height so that the child can make their own record (squiggles, pre-writing, or writing, depend on their development) while the teacher or assistant makes a more formal record.

Other:

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TLC 4 - Feedback Techniques

Handout 4-1

Some feedback techniques that make students think

- **Delayed Marking:** Student work is not given a grade, level, or score on the work (although the teacher records a grade in the teacher's markbook). Teacher written comments address the quality of the work and give guidance to the student on how to improve. Students need to be given time to read the comments in class to find out how they have achieved. After some time (e.g. one week) the teacher talks with students individually to discuss the work, the teacher feedback, and the grade or mark that was given to it.
- **Mastery Marking:** Only accept student work when it is of a specific quality. You might only give one grade, an A. Students are expected to continue to re-draft and resubmit their work as many times as necessary in order to achieve an A. The overall grade is then determined by the number of As. Or you could award a $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{\quad}$ or $\sqrt{-}$. A $\sqrt{\quad}$ or $\sqrt{+}$ means that the student has mastered the necessary skills for the current concept, a $\sqrt{-}$ is accompanied by comments on how to improve, and the student is expected to re-draft and resubmit the work.
- **+, -, = (Plus, Minus, Equals):** Mark student work in relation to previous work. If the latest work is of the same quality as the last, it receives an "=", if it is better than the last it receives a "+", and if it is not as good as the last it receives a "-".
- **Responding to Marking:** Teacher feedback is written at the start of the exercise book and signed and dated. Students then make an appropriate response below the teacher feedback, including where to find any redrafting. The next piece of work will not be marked until the student has responded to the last feedback provided.
- **Focused Marking:** Mark student work for only one or two specific criteria, even though there may be many criteria that could be marked. This allows the teacher to provide more focused and detailed feedback on these criteria than if everything was marked. The markbook contains the skill marked rather than the title of the work set.
- **Find and Fix your Mistakes:** Instead of marking answers as correct or incorrect, tell the students the number of answers that were wrong. Give them time in class to find and correct their mistakes either individually or in groups.
- **Margin Marking:** Instead of marking each spelling or grammar mistake on essays, place a mark in the margin. Students then find their own mistakes, and correct them.
- **Traffic lights:** Students are given a RED, AMBER or GREEN mark for a piece of work, and all RED and AMBER work can be redrafted in an attempt to achieve a GREEN mark. The final grade is calculated from the number of GREEN and AMBER marks.
- **Aim for the Next Level:** Students identify areas of improvement by comparing their work to exemplars at the next level of achievement. Students realise that they need to set themselves higher standards. Able students find that they can improve a good piece of work.

Handout 4-1 contd

- **Some ideas for Early Years:**

1 *Praise carefully.* The best teachers praise less than average, but they are careful to make sure that their praise is *specific* (relating to something the child has just done), *sincere* (so that children believe it) and related to something that is within the child's control (e.g., praise should be for effort or improvement, rather than ability).

2 *Recording verbal feedback.* To improve the effectiveness of verbal feedback, once the teacher has finished giving verbal feedback the child is asked to go back to their seat and to make some kind of record of what they discussed with the teacher. Obviously what the child does depends on their development; some may just make pre-writing squiggles, others may write one or two words, or make a picture of some sort. This has three advantages. First, it creates a record of the feedback, it develops reflectiveness (and, if the child has some literacy skills, also their writing) and thirdly, it provides a mnemonic that helps the child remember what they discussed with the teacher.

3 *Improvement rather than effort.* It is generally very hard for the teacher to know how hard a child has been trying, so try praising improvement instead. This also builds up the idea that ability is incremental rather than fixed, so the child comes to see challenging tasks as a way of getting smarter, rather than a threat to self-esteem.

Giving Students More Responsibility

To help advance their own and other students' learning students need to:

1. recognise where they are in their learning
2. decide where they want to go
3. identify a way to close the gap

Usually it is teachers who take the responsibility for providing this, but students can develop the ability to reflect on their own learning and each other's learning when they are provided with appropriate guidance and structure.

Prerequisites

In order to activate students as instructional resources for one another and as owners of their own learning then:

- Teachers need to
 - believe that ability is incremental rather than fixed so that students can advance their learning.
 - provide structured opportunities for students to work in pairs or groups.
- Students need to
 - develop thinking about their own learning.
 - identify and understand where they are going and what successful performance looks like (i.e. success criteria).

Students need practice applying evaluation criteria to their peer's work before reflecting on their own learning. Applying evaluation criteria to a peer's work is less emotionally charged and can help students to internalise the learning intentions and criteria for success before reflecting on their own work.

Benefits

Research shows that activating students as owner of their own learning and as instructional resources for one another has many benefits:

- Self-assessment improves perseverance, self-belief and achievement which all help to develop life-long learners.
- Peer tutoring benefits both tutor and tutee: the process of explaining entails the peer tutor in thinking about the work and presenting in new ways. The resulting clarification of the work can develop deeper understanding for both students.