

Working Together to... Improve Attainment.



How does teaching reading using word recognition impact children who have specific barriers to learning?

Gill Maclaughlan, Class teacher, Inch View Primary

In what way, can feedback and self-assessment have an impact on learners and their progress?

Mairi G Kennedy, Class teacher, Errol Primary School

In what way does an online professional learning toolkit support practitioners understanding in how to write high quality observations which impact children's learning through the planning for continuous provision?

Suzanne Crighton, Early Years Support Teacher, Various P&K nurseries

How does mixed ability peer tutoring affect pupil attainment in secondary science?

Mr. K Thompson, Teacher of Biology, St John's Academy, Perth

•What did you do?

•Firstly I met with the pupil support teacher and discussed with her my thinking on adopting a word learning approach. This allowed me the opportunity to articulate and justify my thinking. I then needed to discuss with parents my plan as partnership working was a key component. Word selection was also critical. The words that were selected to be learned were chosen because they would be meaningful words to those involved. For example family names/hobbies, words relevant to a particular context and words found in the environment. All contributed to word selection.

•Word learning took place on a daily basis at home and in school. This was supported in school by myself, peers, a PSA and the PST. On a weekly basis I provided support during a Big Write lesson, this allowed me to see if the words that had been learned could be written correctly and then read.

•What changed was that more words were able to be read and then subsequently written. Single word recognition in a range of contexts improved. A record of words that had been learned was kept and shared with home.

•This change occurred because of the following reasons:

- A consistent systematic partnership approach
- Learners could clearly see the progress they were making which positively impacted self-belief and motivation.
- Learners could apply their learning to writing tasks and gain independence.

•Why did you do it?

•I think context is the key factor in my enquiring approach. This enquiry originated from a growing awareness in me and others that the teaching and learning approaches that were being used were no longer having an impact on learner's progress. Drawing on several years of evidence mainly from specific IEP targets and professional discussion it became apparent that a change in approach was justifiable in terms of context.

•The vast majority of literature points towards a phonics approach being the most effect way to acquire reading skills, that has never been in dispute. The Australian Government Literature Review was the key document that encouraged me to raise the possibility of adopting a different approach for some children. In this review of evidence it is stated that for some children with specific barriers to their learning phonics may not be the best approach.

•In terms of policy GIRFEC lies at the heart of all my practice and by placing the learners at the centre of the planning process I strive to meet their needs.

•What has happened as a result?

•The number of words that could be read by individuals increased and both quantitative and qualitative evidence was gathered to demonstrate this.

•I carried out a base line assessment in order to gather quantitative data of the number of words that could be read at the beginning and then throughout the enquiry. A record of learning was also kept within class planning and IEP.

•Understanding of these words was confirmed as the learners were able to use them in the correct contexts in writing.

•Professional dialogue was also key feature of this enquiry as I worked in close partnership with the pupil support teacher. I was able to compare and contrast our findings, discuss any issues and see if learning was transferable.

•Learning conversations form a key part of my evidence. Through these I saw an increase in understanding and motivation.

•A critical component was partnership working with the learner's parent. The parent was able to provide further evidence that the learning could be replicated and transferred.

•A non-planned but invaluable source of evidence was the other children in the class as they regularly began to comment on the learning and progress that they were witnessing. This positively impacted the motivation of all learners not just those involved in

•What are the implications?

•I think the key implication for practice is that any decisions about the learning and teaching needs of individuals or groups needs to be made based on robust evidence. Such as child specific evidence from a range of assessment sources and evidence from wider literature. It is also important that approaches are given time to work and professional judgement is key in deciding whether enough time has been given before a change is made. Furthermore a solutions driven approach is key to better outcomes for all and central to this is parental engagement and partnership working.

•This enquiry has never been about one approach to the teaching of reading versus another but about how a change in approach can impact those with specific barriers to learning. Learners who could not read anything other than a few words were able to by the end read sentences, read words in other contexts and write using these words. It should be noted that learners did draw upon previous knowledge of initial letter sounds but no phonemes were taught or blending strategies used. This strategy worked in this context. Could it work in other contexts for other individuals, yes, however that will depend on the individuals.

•What did you do?

•Worked with twenty-eight Primary 5 children for 10 weeks (SIMD2)

•Began research into Formative Assessment and its components, exploring at LA level and beyond

•Opened the Enquiry with a discussion with children about their knowledge of AfL in the classroom

•Used this feedback to identify how I would lead my Enquiry in the classroom as part of everyday learning

•Had to go back to the beginning of FA with class: explore Learning Intentions and train them in the development of Success Criteria

•Altered **Daily Planning** sheets in response to Clarke, 2001: more important to focus on what they **will learn** rather than what they are **going to do**

•Introduced **Rubrics** in co-operative groups – allowing the language of feedback to be used and developed; letting high quality pieces be viewed and children more motivated when carrying out their own pieces of work

•FA strategies used: 2 stars and a wish; Tickled Pink/Green for Growth; Awesome Orange/Perplexed Purple; First of Five; Traffic Lights; Verbal / Written Feedback; comment only marking

•Exit Tickets were used to assess learning and inform the groupings for the following lesson

•Ended Enquiry with a discussion with children about their knowledge of AfL in the classroom

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•In terms of policy GIRFEC lies at the heart of all my practice and by placing the learners at the centre of the planning process I strive to meet their needs.

•What has happened as a result?

•For Pupils

- More enthusiasm and interest in their learning
- Confidence grew – much more ready to verbalise the Success Criteria
- Growth Mindset being developed – more willing to have a go knowing the feedback would be constructive
- A better understanding of the language of feedback between children – no longer “You worked hard” or “Your writing could be neater” but comments that reflected the Success Criteria e.g. “You must have listened as you wrote detailed notes”, “Can you give another example of...”

•For Staff

- For me, more prepared for lessons; activities much more purposeful and meaningful ; meeting the needs of the learners better – more independent in their learning; appeared to work at a quicker pace
- For my colleagues – not a great deal!
- Lack of opportunity to share during Collegiate Times

•What are the implications?

•My practice:

- Continue to be passionate about teaching
- Don't let the AfL books gather dust – keep reading and refreshing my knowledge and understanding
- Lead from the classroom – inform, share and support others

•School:

- Create a culture of AfL – embed its aspects to ensure consistency and accountability – take ALL staff with you; prioritise for Collegiate times
- Growth Mindset – promoting and developing
- Include Parents in the AfL Journey

•More widely:

- Better experiences at school / strong Growth Mindset – CfE's 4 capacities
- Have the skills necessary to be prepared for work and life: articulate; determination; resilience, persistence
- Attainment Gap narrowed – equity for all

•What did you do?

•My plan at the beginning of this process has changed quite dramatically from what I first envisaged happening.

- Develop a template to support observation writing within the Early Level
- Through further professional dialogue and by reviewing the quality of observations currently being written, it became clear that devising an online learning tool would best support practitioners. The online tool would;
- Support practitioners understanding in writing high quality observations
- Provide examples and share how observations inform planning for the continuous provision within the learning environment

•I have worked closely with one of my pilot schools and have modelled how to write a quality observation and have discussed in detail how observations can inform planning of experiences and the provision of resources to ensure support and challenge across learners. The practitioner shared how this has impacted her practice and refined her observational skills and use of observations to support planning.



Why did you do it?

•Brodie (2013) has been an influential source in my enquiry as she highlights the essential need for adults to consider the reasons for making an observation. Brodie also highlights the work of Nutbrown (1996) who states that;

•“...adults need to make detailed and sensitive observations to really ‘see’ what children are doing, to make sense of their actions, to recognise their achievements and to create further learning opportunities.”

•This links to the work of Alistair Bryce-Clegg and the use of observations to plan for continuous provision ensuring experiences support and challenge learners in a meaningful and relevant context. This has also been recognised in reports on the National Improvement Hub which states;

•“...assessment involves reflecting on one or more factual observations and then analysing, interpreting and making judgements about any significant interests, strengths and capabilities the child has demonstrated.” (National Improvement Hub, 2018)

•Using the literature and Council policy there was scope to further develop an online learning tool to ensure significant understanding of the observation, planning and assessment cycle across practitioners.

•What has happened as a result?

•Through working closely with my pilot primary 1 class and teacher I have

- Observed current practice
- Conduct professional dialogue around areas of good practice and potential areas for improvement
- Modelling and sharing how to write high quality observations
- Discussing how to use observations to develop the continuous provision in a meaningful context for all children

•The evidence:

- Children are more engaged
- They are transferring learning across a wider range of contexts
- The practitioner is more confident in her role when standing back and observing
- The practitioner is making more significant observations which both support the individual and also support future planning of experiences.

•Moving forward I plan to share the online learning tool more widely and gather evidence to further develop the tool and information regarding the impact it has on developing practitioners knowledge and understanding of high quality significant observations and how these support continuous provision.

•What are the implications?

•The Implications

- Ensuring effective working relationships with colleagues
- Workload – ensuring the tool is supportive and not a time constraint
- Working across a range of Early Years settings – not in one place consistently
- Roll out of the online learning tool – future planning for how best to share across colleagues
- Developing practitioners professional skills in writing and utilising high quality observations to plan for continuous provision

•What did you do?

•I am aware of a body of literature that indicates peer tutoring is very effective in promoting learning. In my school we have very active peer tutoring in Maths; especially amongst first years. I have toyed with the idea of using peer tutoring in my classroom for many years; going so far as to arrange the class in mixed ability groups post assessment.

•Again, I rearranged my S1 class in a peer tutoring arrangement — highest tests scores with lowest test scores and then the middle ground working together. Unlike my normal procedure I decided to utilise this arrangement for peer tutoring rather than my previous hope-filled expectations of passive support. A minimum of 15 minutes every Friday was set aside for group activities designed to consolidate the topics covered during the week; one of these activities took the whole 50 minute period. Some of these activities were followed up with related homework as a means of further consolidation but with the added benefit of providing evidence for my intervention.



•Why did you do it?

•I am increasingly conscious of pupils in my school having a negative perception of their ability to understand Science. At a time we are striving to increase the scientific literacy of pupils, and the population as a whole, to counteract pseudoscience (e.g. bogus health claims, anti-vaccine groups, climate change deniers) and prepare pupils for a role in an increasingly technological society, the perception of science as “too difficult” seems to be increasing amongst pupils. Uptake in science classes is dropping with pupils increasingly choosing courses where they believe they will achieve a good National 5. The BGE is our best chance at counteracting these local trends.

•There is a wealth of literature supporting the implementation of peer support systems for improving attainment in Maths and primary schools. In addition, there is a small body of evidence suggesting it may also be effective in Science. Thus I decided to attempt to improve pupil attainment in Science by arranging a class in peer tutoring groups and investigating the effect that this would have on attainment.

•I am conscious that this intervention may be perceived as a means of “Closing the Gap” by supporting the less able but providing no support to develop the more able. Yet there is evidence that the act of tutoring promotes retention of knowledge and an increase in understanding.

•What has happened as a result?

•The evidence collected so far suggests that most pupils have gained a benefit from the peer tutoring activities they have completed. At this stage we have completed 2 activities designed to interrogate the effectiveness of the intervention. Firstly, a homework task was set to follow on from one of the peer tutoring activities undertaken. In the classroom pupils had worked together to complete a task.

•This task was repeated as a homework exercise a week later. In addition, a second previously unseen section was added. A difference of 26% in the number of correct responses was noted favouring the peer tutoring (see graph). For the second interrogation method, pupils were asked to anonymously comment on the effectiveness of the peer tutoring activities on their understanding.

•The responses here were varied with 47% viewing the intervention as a positive effect on their learning — though for many this was through increased concentration. 53% felt there had been no change from the intervention; of this 33% felt that the groupings were an issue as they didn't get on with the pupils they were expected to work with and 13% wanted to work with their friends or further from the teacher.



•What are the implications?

•This intervention supports my hypothesis that peer tutoring supports learning in the classroom. Based on the formal and informal feedback so far it appears that organising pupils in peer tutoring groups after an assessment promotes the development of understanding.

•As a consequence I will continue to arrange my classes to promote peer tutoring but will develop activities to utilise this time effectively and provide opportunities to develop the skills required by peer tutors and tutees. I will also need to repeat my intervention to confirm its reliability and share my findings with my colleagues in the Science department.