

DISCUSSION GROUP:

ASSESSMENT

The following notes were scribed as shared feedback from a discussion at BCME on assessment. This discussion was the second session on assessment. We worked in three groups of three on some statements that were important for us. We had stimuli for discussion in the shape of an article by Clare Lee on assessment in edition 175 of Mathematics Teaching and the following statements:

'The only summative assessment necessary is that at the end of the school year.'

'A teaching activity is not valid unless assessment of it contributes to planning future learning.'

'Teachers mark too much and assess for learning too little.'

'Pupils learn nothing from grades – it is the teacher's comments on how to "close the gap" between their current understanding and a learning objective that matter.'

'Self-assessment is the most powerful type of assessment. We must teach pupils to be aware of their learning objectives, of their level of understanding and of their progress.'

The notes below were made as each small group fed back and the whole group discussed their statements.

Assessment should not impede the enjoyment of the subject. Rich activities may be hard to grade; if we need to grade we lose the richness.

Assessment as part of positive classroom practice

Can we keep learners' enthusiasm for learning when we need to teach them things they don't want to learn? We do adapt to different cultures

- treat as human beings
- work with them
- sharing an interest
- showing you care
- treat as equals in discussion

How do we produce life long learners?

Ask “why” with right and wrong answers. All answers are valuable.
Thank for responses.

Ask for a variety of answers. Give pupils time to reflect on answers as a group. Give pupils an opportunity to correct a mistake.

Establishing a conjecturing atmosphere? a move towards doing real mathematics.

How do we do this?

- listen to pupils
- change type of work, give choice within topic, give information about purpose behind task
- when tried out more effective with girls than with boys
- change reactions; actively deal with undesirable responses (though these can go underground)

Formative assessment

Formal summative assessment rarely measures the things about your students which you really need to know

Good teachers are always doing formative assessment and adjusting what they are doing

How do we manage formative assessment in the classroom?

Do we need to record?

What do we need to record?

It might be comments.

Importance of errors in formative assessment

- not perceiving errors as failures
- can there be formative assessment without errors?
- a mistake is a learning opportunity
- implications for classroom culture

Effective feedback needs to be part of the learning process, no use bolted on at the end. In modelling, feedback goes back into modifying the process. It should be the same in teaching.

Need a second opportunity to revisit work to act on comments e.g. drafting and redrafting in English.

Problem solving contains the type of choices which benefit from revisiting.

Modelling must be refined.

Different timescales of assessment – immediate in class and plenary review a few weeks later

Use assessment at the end of teaching to inform the next block of teaching.

Feedback to individuals is hard in the context of managing a whole class.

Changing practice

Culture shift in what we recognise as important in our teaching

- easy
- effective

Make small shifts – start small, try something small

Use questions which allow for good discussion, good opportunities for assessment, don't need to be amazing questions – it's often how we develop and work from the answers which is important

There is an issue of building the confidence of teachers and the skills of pupils in having open discussions.

Self assessment

Self assessment – links with summative assessment

- could be used as summative assessment
- at key points (not at end of topics – though there never is an end to a topic)
- additional purpose for self assessment, beyond other purposes we have
- helps pupils to recognise what they have achieved over a period
- empowering in terms of understanding own learning
- progressive assessment not testing

Pupils identifying which results they are not confident with e.g. Clare Lee article in MT175.