



Transcription: Advice implementing AFL

James Woodworth

Teacher Trainer
UK

One of the key elements of assessment for learning is that it puts the responsibility firmly towards the learner. It encourages learners to take responsibility for their learning; that means that they are encouraged to become more empowered and to feel that they are more in control of the learning process; that, by implication, means that teachers can relinquish some of the control which they may think they have to have over the learning environment.

If teachers are over controlling then there is potentiality that we are holding students back, and not giving them the skills and resources that they'd need to be able to stand on their own two feet. I think that's actually very important.

At the beginning of any academic process the teacher may need to do a lot of teaching because the students don't really know what's expected of them, they don't really know what it is they're meant to be doing, so I think it's fine to have a lot of teaching up front, however, as the learning progresses students need to be able to become, I think, more independent, to be able to make decisions for themselves, to take control, and believe that they are actually in control of their lives, so that when they walk away from the learning environment they can operate successfully. If they think they need people all the time to keep helping them out then we're keeping them stuck in a position of powerlessness, which is fundamentally counter-productive, really.

With assessment for learning strategies I think it's really important that the students have some evidence to represent the progress that they're making and the learning that they are making. High quality classroom talk's important. It might be that those conversations are recorded. It could be that students are keeping some log of critical writing, so these could be writing frames where they are reflecting on their achievement using critical language, and they've been taught how to do that.

They know what the criteria is for the completion of an assignment. An assignment, part of the assessment criteria might actually be based around high quality classroom talk, critical thinking, and self-assessment skills. So having had a conversation they might write up that conversation in some form. They may use video evidence. They may want to use taped recordings of their conversations, so that they can build up a written log of evidence of their achievement but also an online portfolio.

One of the things that teachers could also ensure is how they are facilitating the learning outside of the classroom, so most students are very, very familiar with social networking but learners could be taught how to use social networking effectively to support each other outside of the classroom. Why couldn't students keep... why couldn't students make podcasts? Why couldn't students keep a video diary of their achievements and put it on their own YouTube channel or the organisation's YouTube channel.

I think we've got to think really, really inventively and creatively as to how we use a whole range of resources to capture the learner's learning experiences.

I would say that for teachers who are considering using assessment for learning strategies they need to think very carefully about how they would orchestrate classroom talk. They need to think about how they've personally been taught, because I think most teachers teach in the way that they were taught themselves, and when you start using assessment for learning strategies you're having to radically rethink how you are personally going to deliver learning; that means stepping outside your

comfort zone; that means having a go at doing things that you haven't done before; that means accepting the fact that you might not get it right the first time, the second time, or even a third time, and being able to tolerate that.

So that's what I would say to teachers that are thinking about using assessment for learning strategies for the first time, is, "Give it a go, look at the research, there's plenty of research out there that shows that it does work. Start looking at examples of best practice, start experimenting, give it a go and don't give up if it doesn't work the first time".

You also have to bear in mind that you may be working with a group of learners who haven't been taught like that before, so they may very well rebel the first time they're being asked to do something which is new and different, because it makes them feel uncomfortable, they're also having to step outside their comfort zone, but you have to stick with it and not give up.

Learn more! For more information, please visit www.cie.org.uk/events or contact Customer Services on +44 1223 553554 or email info@cie.org.uk