Once learners are used to the routine of producing success criteria, it can happen often – not necessarily for all tasks. You may be concerned that there will not be enough time in lessons to do this. However, you will quickly discover that time is no longer wasted on repeating the task instructions because the learners now all understand what they have to do and are keen to get on and complete the task.

Giving success criteria a central role in lessons and allowing learners to produce them:

• Helps learners to gain a deeper understanding of what to do

• Gives learners ownership of the criteria so that they can create a successful 'product'

• Gives learners a basis for self-evaluation and peer evaluation

• Enables learners to become active learners

See the section on Assessment for how the creation of Success Criteria fits into formative assessment techniques.

> ### Training Activity: Creating Success Criteria with Learners (Appendix A5)
> In the appendices you will find a training activity on how to create success criteria with your learners. Teachers will find their own ways of doing this as their expertise develops.

Talk Partners

Using talk partners can create a very positive atmosphere in the classroom as learners find themselves working with different people – people who they do not know that well. Teachers can decide how to organise talk partners in either a structured or a random way. Partners can be changed around at certain intervals to vary the experience.

Talk partners:

• Are all-inclusive

• Result in increased tolerance and respect

• Are excited by new partners

• Result in improved behaviour

• Have benefits for learners with special educational needs

• Result in increased self-esteem

3.2 Active Learning

The following description of an activity, (which is not a full lesson plan), illustrates how learners can be actively involved in their learning. This activity will begin to show how a different approach to presenting a topic can impact upon learning.

Learning Activity

Stage 4: Reading This activity assumes that learners have read a wide selection of poems.

Learning Intention: (4Rf14) Compare and contrast poems and investigate poetic features

Activity: Identifying poetic features

The activity is designed to link assessment and learning.

Learners are asked to work together to sort a set of cards into three piles:

AGREE / DISAGREE / IT DEPENDS ON (we need to find out more)

The cards might look like this:

rhyme	have an ending
follow rules	involve feelings
have punctuation	tell a story
are written in lines	have verses
contain verbs	are written in sentences

The cards are designed to challenge the learners' ideas. The discussion may lead to some disagreement. Learners will have to justify their ideas and this might challenge their thinking.

Cards can be created by teachers to explore learners' ideas in relation to other topics – e.g. punctuation, sentence structure. They are also appropriate for issues found in stories like characterisation and figurative language. The cards should include some 'incorrect' ideas or ideas that often cause confusion. Using blank cards can be a good idea so that learners can add their own ideas – more able learners may do a slightly different task where they are given blank cards and asked to do the same task by filling in the cards themselves. Less able learners may be given fewer cards.

Follow up:

Groups can be asked to present their ideas. Areas of disagreement can become a focus for further learning.

Learners can be given a range of poetry books and asked to check their ideas. They may find that they can produce a list of features for particular types of poems from their cards.

This type of activity shows the strengths and weaknesses of learners by engaging them in a positive way. Asking learners to write a list of features common to all poems would not result in such good quality learning. This type of formative assessment can inform whether the objective has been met or whether further work is required – this may affect the next lesson or form part of a plan for a later follow-up lesson.

Active learning recognises that the focus in teaching is getting learners to 'do' rather than 'listen'. This emphasises the practical nature of teaching at the primary phase. Learning by doing attaches real meaning to whatever related knowledge is being taught. Being told how to swim is after all not the same as being able to do it and as thought is an action too, we need to put it into a context, connect it to our emotions as we discover its applications. Understanding requires belief and these three simple points are a neat reminder of how that deeper learning is accessed through activity.

- I listen   – I forget
- I see   – I believe
- I do   – I understand

It is clear that a range of different teaching strategies will be needed to provide the correct environment in which learners can develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Included in these are methods that encourage active learning, thinking skills and independent work. The role of the teacher in planning, providing and adapting learning experiences to cover a range of learning abilities (differentiation) is central to promoting skills and knowledge development. Good differentiation is the key.

3.3 Differentiation

Differentiation is when a teacher reflects on learners' needs and matches the teaching methods, learning tasks, resources or environment to individual learners or groups of learners. There is a variety of reasons for the range in learners' needs, but the key principle is that through differentiation all learners can become successful learners.

The main reasons for the need for differentiation in the primary classroom are:

– **the learners' level of ability,** this is both for supporting the less able as well as challenging the most able

– **personal styles of learning** or pace of work.

How to differentiate

There are many ways in which teachers can create or adapt teaching methods or materials to give every child the opportunity for challenge and success. Some ways of differentiating are:

- **By using ability groups.** The most common way of differentiation is where learners are placed in high, average or low ability groups for some subjects. This can be the most effective way to help the teacher match the work to the different levels, but it sometimes causes the less able learners to develop a poor self-image, especially if groupings are rarely reviewed