



CAMBRIDGE

Unlocking assessment as a superpower for teachers and school leaders

Dr Simon Child – The Assessment Network, Cambridge University Press & Assessment

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Cambridge Schools Conference, July 2026
Future-ready: preparing learners to thrive

In this workshop you will

- Explore how assessment practices can promote learner self-management, agency and metacognition
- Examine how classroom environments and culture can support wellbeing and positive relationships
- Consider how assessment for learning strategies (success criteria and feedback) can help learners monitor, plan and take responsibility for progress
- Collaborate to develop practical tactics that connect formative strategies with summative outcomes.

Warm up task



What is your own definition of 'self-management'?



What role does assessment have in affecting learner's self-management?

A definition

‘An individual’s control of their behaviour, particularly regarding the pursuit of a specific objective’



Assessing self-management

- Identify the type of thinking and learning they have been engaged in and see what might be useful in other contexts.
- Seek out and act on guidance (review and improve)
- Identify and prioritise their own learning needs.
- Show independence in setting personal goals and targets.
- Prioritise the most important things to do.
- Use time effectively and persist with tasks in the face of frustration.
- Be aware of where their own learning fits into the bigger picture.
- Prepare to comment on the originality and value of their work.

<https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Resource/Rubric%20for%20Assessing%20Self-Management.pdf>



RUBRIC FOR ASSESSING SELF-MANAGEMENT



How effective assessment supports self-management

Helps define the 'objective'
e.g. learning outcome or a
broader goal

Supports 'deliberate practice'
of reactions to day-to-day
learning events in a safe
environment

Opens a window in student's
own mind i.e. supports
metacognition

Provides a motivational
focus

Encourages reflection on
progress – growth mindset

Building an effective assessment culture in schools

What does a good assessment culture **in a classroom** look like?



Teacher



Learner

Some further thoughts

- Feedback prioritised to ‘cause thinking’.
- Learners anticipate feedback and enjoy receiving it.
- ‘Improvement time’ to implement learning or remedial instruction.
- Learners recognise their own progress towards goals.

‘It is increasingly important to reconsider the effects of assessment on each student’s long-term future learning capacity’

(Leong & Tan, 2014)

Indicators that you are assessing too much in the classroom or with the wrong purpose

- Not having time to analyse performance to provide feedback
- Learners preoccupied by the next assessment
- Learners expressing anxiety
- Learners expressing performance motivations.

**‘Once an emotional reaction occurs, the learning will certainly stop’
(William, 2011)**

Developing children's relationships with assessment: Child A and Child B

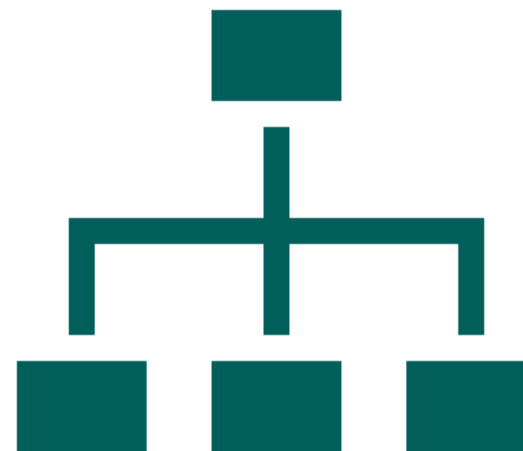
End of term assessment based on around six weeks of lessons (Lower secondary)
Geography

Child A	Child B
Raw score with fixed grading (e.g. 80% = A) with written feedback	Comment only feedback to the student
Individual reporting given in class to all students	Class strengths and weaknesses analysed by teacher to help prepare for next lesson
Score goes into data hub to as part of student monitoring and to measure progress based on a flightpath	Student performance included in data framework based on curriculum concepts
Scores aggregated to make a predicted grade for IGCSE	

What does a good assessment culture **in a school** look like?



Teacher



School leadership

Some further thoughts

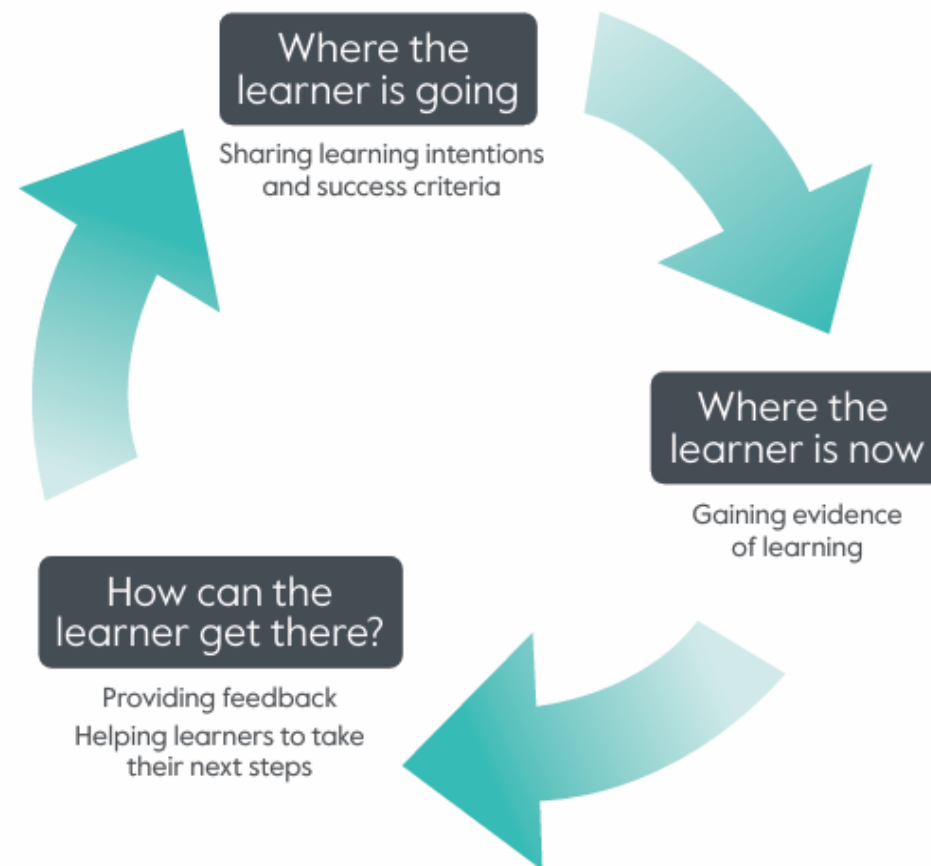
- Discussion of the ‘trade offs’ and limitations of any one assessment and its data.
- A negotiated and agreed upon assessment framework.
- Professional development opportunities for teachers (in developing assessment expertise).
- Relatively low anxieties expressed around assessment (Adie et al, 2021).
- Values driven.

Indicators of an unhealthy assessment/data culture in your school

Symptoms	Diagnosis
Teachers feel anxious about discussing class or personal performance.	Disproportionately high stakes accountability
Observed malpractice within classes for set assessments.	
Staff do not engage with headline data and do not see their part in contributing to it.	Data is reported to staff body with no explanation or opportunity for discussion
Pressures to input assessment data but with no understanding how it is to be used.	
Students and teachers not engaging with targets , describing them as unrealistic	Lack of training and support to understand statistical methods behind target setting approach.
Parental complaints regarding student data shared at teacher-parent meetings	Incomplete or missing published parental information on the website. Lack of information can lead to fear, which can lead to dissent/complaints.

Making assessment a process rather than an end point

Getting started with assessment for learning



A second dimension: five formative strategies (Wiliam, 2011)

	Where the learner is going	Where the learner is	How to get there
Teacher	Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions	Engineering effective discussions, tasks, and activities that elicit evidence of learning	Providing feedback that moves learners forward
Peer		Activating students as learning resources for one another	
Learner		Activating students as owners of their own learning	

Activity 1: Learning intentions and success criteria

- How do you use your learning intentions during a lesson?
- How do you share your success criteria in a lesson?
- Do you write these criteria in learner-friendly language?

Clarifying, understanding and sharing learning intentions

What do we want students to know and be able to do?

Learning intention	Success Criteria
A statement which goes beyond naming the topic, to include detail of new knowledge or skills. Emphasises the visible positive changes in pupils' performance.	Expand on the learning intentions. They specify a set of conditions that pupils must meet. Clarify key factors that can be used to indicate where, or to what extent, the pupils have achieved their learning intentions.

Part of curriculum planning

Focus on what is to be learned, not what is to be taught

Learning intention types

Learning intention style	Example
Instructions	Use capital letters when writing sentences
Affirmation	I am going to use capital letters when writing sentences
Achievements	I can use capital letters when writing sentences
Goals	To be able to use capital letters when writing sentences
Learning	I am learning to use capital letters when writing sentences
Prompts	Remember to use capital letters when writing sentences
Extra effort	I will try harder to use capital letters when writing sentences

Success criteria tips

- Should be clear and measurable definitions of success
 - Knowledge gained
 - Skill or technique learned
- Describe how teachers and learners will know that they have been successful
- Can be linked to ‘products’, ‘performances’ or ‘learning strategies’ that you are targeting
- Should **not** just be a repetition of the learning intentions
- Should provide a focus for the activity in the classroom
- Can be used as basis for teacher assessment, feedback or peer assessment

Success criteria – teacher focused

Learning intention: I am learning to read books for enjoyment, and to express that enjoyment through a well-constructed review of a chosen book

- Shows understanding of the chosen genre or form
 - Knowledge of the text under review
 - Conveys enthusiasm for the text (or the opposite)
 - Uses references well without giving away too much
 - Adopts an appropriate critical stance
 - Makes a clear recommendation
- Expresses ideas fluently, imaginatively, and with control of expression
- Writing displays mechanical competence

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Ireland (2015)

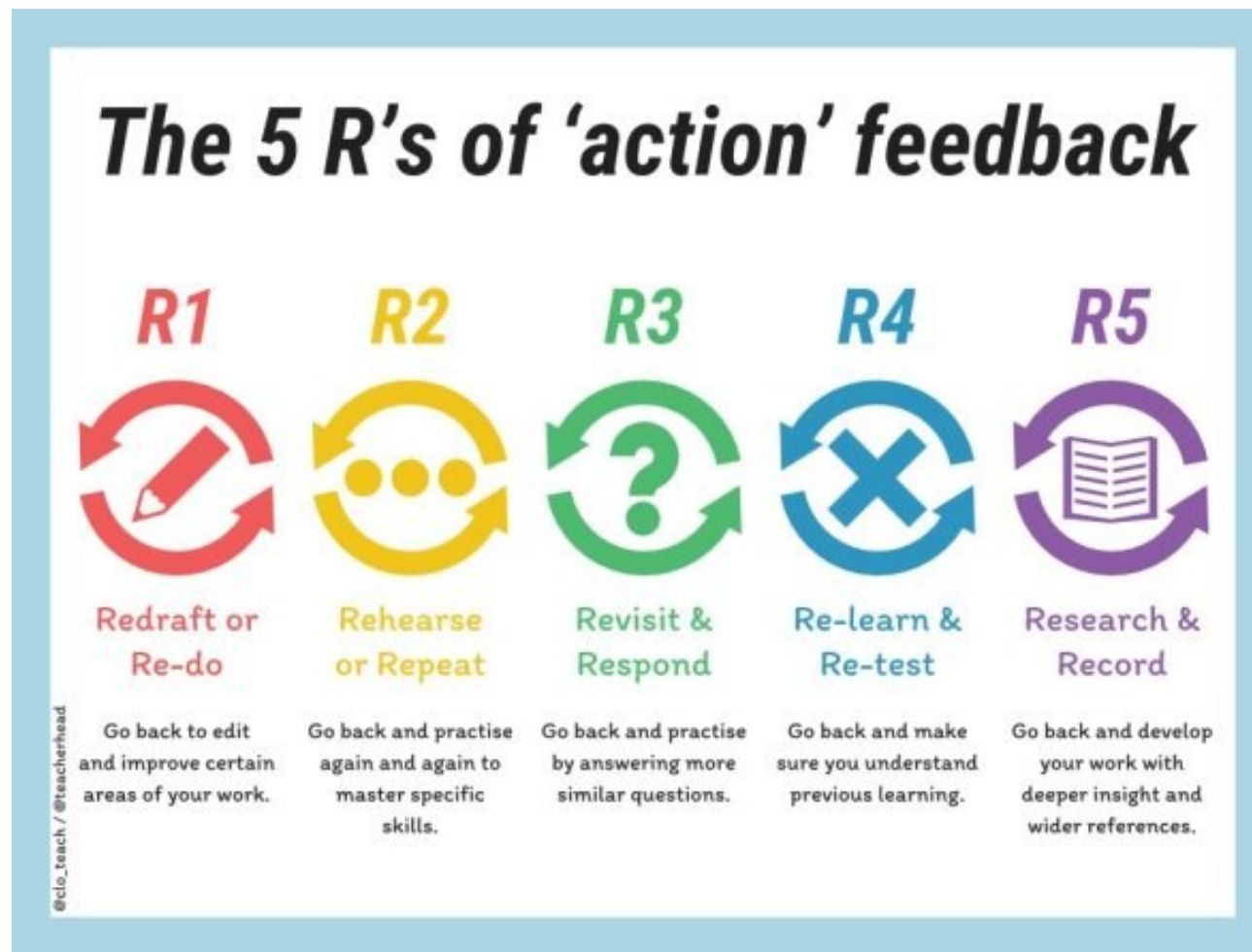
Success criteria – learner friendly

- I show a good knowledge of the book
- I convey my enthusiasm for the text (or show clearly the parts I don't like)
- I express my ideas fluently and choose the right words and phrases most of the time
- My writing is accurate with correct spelling and grammar

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Ireland (2015)

A focus on feedback

Providing feedback that moves learners forward



Sherrington (2017)

Comment only feedback

- Focuses pupil on the 'next steps' rather than a connection to vague standards criteria
- Focuses pupil on self-improvement rather than comparison with others
- Builds a relationship with assessment that is more closely aligned with assessment purposes
- Improves grades over time.

Can we get pupils to turn around to each other in the classroom upon receiving assessment outcomes and ask **'what do you need to learn?'**, rather than **'what did you get?'**

Feedback and growth mindset

Buttler (1988) cited in Wiliam (2017)

	Achievement	Attitude
Grades	No gain	High scorers + Low scorers -
Comments	30% gain	High scorers + Low scorers +

‘One whose primary goal is to expand their knowledge and their ways of thinking and investigating the world. They do not see grades as an end in themselves but as means to continue to grow.’ (Dweck, 2012)

Activity 2: Activating students as learning resources for one another

Discuss at your tables:

- What are the issues with asking questions to the entire classroom in a 'hands up activity'?
- Think about this in terms of developing 'self management' in learners.



Possible ideas

- Elicits evidence of learning from one pupil rather than many.
- Can be dominated by one or two more able pupils.
- Can give teachers a false sense of security of knowledge in their class.
- **Allows students to be passive in their own classroom**

BUT still can be useful when...

- checking task completion
- asking for ideas from the class
- for students to ask questions
- to gather volunteers.

An alternative – think, pair, share



Question posed by the teacher.

Students encouraged to think about their answers and write down their thoughts.

Pupils discuss their responses as pairs.

Teachers walks around room and listens to discussions.

Teacher states that each person will need to be able to summarise what their partner says

Pupils share thinking with the rest of the class.

Teachers can 'cold call' any of the individuals or pairs.

Activating students as owners of their own learning

Possible options

Giving pupils access to (simplified) curriculum documents to know what they will be learning about within a subject

Provide examples of performance at various levels of sophistication

Ask pupils to note down what takeaways they have from feedback received

Ask pupils to set their own learning goals

Monitor student's willingness and desire to learn

Activity 3: from formative assessment strategies to tactics

Look at the following list of assessment for learning tactics to support the strategies

- Which ones do you currently conduct in your own classrooms?
- Which ones **do you not** implement but could?
- Which ones are not possible at this time and why?

Feedback



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Any questions?

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Thank you!

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Classroom assessment

Classroom Assessment for Teachers: Transforming Outcomes for Learners



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With Classroom Assessment for Teachers: Transforming Outcomes for Learners you will be equipped with evidence-based strategies and tools to help navigate a changing educational landscape.

After a successful pilot, this on-demand course has now launched. Combining Cambridge expertise with practical teaching experience to transform classroom assessment outcomes this course will be suitable at both an individual and schoolwide level.

This course has been designed with a range of examples from a variety of subjects in mind, and has been built for educators at any stage of their career looking to develop their assessment expertise.

- **Module 1:** A brief introduction to assessment theory.
- **Module 2:** Constructing and implementing a successful assessment strategy.
- **Module 3:** Designing and asking effective questions.
- **Module 4:** Collecting and critically interpreting assessment data.
- **Module 5:** Optimising feedback for learners.
- **Module 6:** Metacognition, self and peer-assessment.

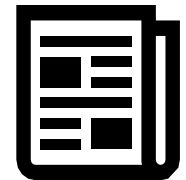
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