

An exploration into the process and impact of introducing the Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies of sharing learning intentions and success criteria with Junior Infants

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on what happens when Assessment for Learning (AfL) is incorporated into a junior infant classroom. It investigates the process and impact of implementing an AfL programme consisting of eight science lessons which incorporated a number of AfL strategies and techniques. These encouraged more collaborative interactions between the teacher and students in the assessment process.

An action research model was chosen in order to document and use both the teacher and students' perspective of the AfL experience. This allowed for increased understanding of practice, and identification of future areas of improvement. Qualitative data gathering techniques included interviews, observation notes, a researcher's journal and other documentary evidence.

The findings show that a range of AfL strategies and techniques were successfully introduced and developed in this classroom. The positive effects included a range of student learning gains and associated language development. The participants were positively disposed towards the changes in classroom practice, particularly the use of various AfL techniques for further communication and engagement with the learning intentions and success criteria.

The introduction of AfL with junior infants was not without its challenges. The need for suitably age appropriate AfL materials and extensive teacher knowledge of AfL was noted. The importance of Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs) that could facilitate teacher development leading to improved AfL knowledge and practice became apparent. The need for on-going professional development, support and video examples of AfL in action for infant teachers is a recurrent theme throughout this study.

It is suggested that the study could also be a useful tool for sharing with other teachers and schools as a guide to facilitating similar teacher studies and AfL implementation.