

How can we use assessment for learning to help pupils become independent learners?

The Learning How to Learn project showed how few teachers (20%) implemented AfL practices in ways that promoted independent learning by pupils. Teachers who *were* successful at promoting independent learning gave pupils activities that offered them scope to think for themselves and ensured the activities built cumulatively. The project gave the example of a teacher (Tracey) who inadvertently constrained her pupils' learning through giving them tightly controlled activities that were limited in scope and provided little opportunity for discussion. First, she asked her pupils to correct a piece of writing which was full of spelling and punctuation errors. Then she asked them to correct the technical errors in each other's work. The classroom dialogue involved pupils volunteering mistakes they had found and the corrections they had made. Tracey's lesson restricted pupils' understanding of what quality might look like because it focused on features that were simply right or wrong, rather than focusing on higher order concepts such as style and effect.

Your evidence

You might find it helpful to explore the nature of the assessment for learning activities you organise for two or three of your classes. You could use it to help you reflect about how much scope they offer for pupils to think for themselves.

Type of activity (e.g. paired discussion about strengths and areas for development of a piece of work)	Aspects of work that expect pupils to explore during the activity (e.g. layout, effectiveness of vocabulary, clarity of methods used)	Length of time allocated	Reason for choice

Next steps

Having completed the table, you might like to explore with a colleague the extent to which you think you've got the balance right between closely controlled activities, and tasks which encourage pupil interaction, thinking and understanding. Would it be helpful to share this information with your colleagues and to ask them for a range of examples of how they use assessment for learning to promote independence so that you can try out each other's ideas?

Find out more

- The learning The Learning How to Learn project can be found at : www.learntolearn.ac.uk/
- You may want to read *Learning how to learn through AfL strategies* available as part of the project resources.