

## Section A: Managing Transformational Change

### Unit 1: Reflective professionals and thinking children

#### Presentation notes

##### Slide 1

This is the introductory unit in The Highland Council Learning and Teaching Reflection Framework. Its aim is to set a context within which the range of issues and ideas covered in other units of the framework can be viewed. It should not be taken as a policy statement; its main purpose is to provoke some lively early discussion around the areas covered in greater detail in subsequent sections of the framework..

##### Session 1

A Curriculum for Excellence: purposes meet pedagogy

##### Slide 2

A Curriculum for Excellence is a framework document. It sets out values, principles and purposes of the curriculum. It does not purport to tell any teacher what to teach on a Monday morning. Indeed, its underlying philosophy is that Scottish teachers can be trusted not to require detailed guidelines on what to teach, when to teach it, in what order to teach it or for how many minutes per week to teach it. Teachers can be trusted to make professional decisions on behalf of their pupils. And, for the first time in Scottish education, the ‘how’ of teaching is seen as being as important as the ‘what’ of teaching. It is not just about ‘methodology’; it is about pedagogy – the rationale of teaching, the interface between theory and practice. The litmus test of A Curriculum for Excellence will be the extent to which it improves learning and teaching (and delivers greater consistency across classrooms and across sectors).

It might be useful at this point to set an activity that allows participants to begin to think about how they see the challenge A Curriculum for Excellence may present. This could be done as a think, pair, share

activity using a simple SWOT analysis of the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats offered by ACfE as a context in which schools could develop and improve learning and teaching.

Depending on how this activity is organised, it could provide a brief opportunity to think about some of the issues involved. It could also provide the basis for a much more substantial activity and it could be an activity to return to at a later date as one way of evaluating progress.

##### Slide 3

The original report from the Curriculum Review Group was only published in 2004. Since then, there has been a period of national ‘engagement’ and a number of follow-up documents, such as *A Curriculum for Excellence: progress and proposals* and *Building the Curriculum*. It has to be said that there have been some controversial developments in this period. New Levels have emerged, not the same as 5-14 Levels. “Curriculum Areas” have also emerged but these are not the subject areas of 5-14, nor are they the subjects of the secondary curriculum; they are not the Modes of Standard Grade either – they are, we are told, “organisers”. No-one is able to explain whence these came or who was responsible for their production. Thus, at this juncture, two views are possible:

1. ACfE represents a new paradigm of learning and teaching, or
2. ACfE is the Emperor’s New Clothes.

What happens next is largely down to those at the centre – SEED and LTS – and how local authorities and schools respond. The release of the new Learning Outcomes may give us the first indication as to whether the innovative tone of the original document will survive or whether the conservative elements in the system will prevail.

However, running in parallel with ACfE is Assessment is for Learning (AifL). It is already making a difference to pedagogy up and down the country. It has engaged teachers professionally and has challenged them to look beyond the strategies to the rationale for their use.

Meanwhile, other, worthy developments are taking place in Scotland, from Determined to Succeed to Citizenship, from Better Behaviour Better Learning to Hungry for Success. The time is right now in Scotland to join-up these developments by identifying the underlying principles and through appropriate CPD, equip teacher to create 'learning classrooms' in Scottish schools.

#### Slide 4

So what would the principles of effective learning and teaching look like. How should teachers create learning classrooms?

1. Active or passive learning is an important dimension. Giving pupils some control over their own learning, collaborative learning and cognitive challenge are all important here. If pupils understand why they are learning and what the characteristics are of successful learning, then they are better equipped to self- and peer-assess and to become actively engaged.
2. Black and Wiliam have indicated that, if they were to revisit *Inside the Black Box* they would place greater emphasis on dialogue and less on the narrow area of questioning. This would be between teacher and pupil(s) as well as among pupils. Collaborative learning, since the work of Vygotsky, has had a solid body of research evidence to support its efficacy. However in recent times, pressure of curriculum coverage and examination syllabuses have made many teachers uncertain of its role.
3. Engagement is a key issue. Motivation of learners has always been high on teachers' agendas. Presenting learning in new, challenging and rich ways is one important way of engaging learners. Whether it is David Perkins' 'teaching

for understanding' or the 'rich tasks' from the Queensland New Basics programme, the challenge is to find ways of making connections across as well as within subjects. Howard Gardner, the proponent of multiple intelligences, argues that subject-based curricula and inter-disciplinary approaches are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, the research evidence suggests that inter-disciplinary approaches actually strengthen the disciplines because their contribution has to be made explicit. Gardner's 'disciplined mind' and 'synthesizing mind' are complementary.

4. The ultimate aim is to promote thinking in our classrooms. Teachers can model it, can allow time for it, can value it and can give pupils strategies for getting better at it. AifL and ACfE can create the context for thinking.

These four principles are used throughout this and other sections in The Highland Council Reflection Framework to provide a practical rationale for embedding and extending formative assessment in order to address a number of current national priorities.

#### Slide 5

The relationship between thinking and learning has been acknowledged for many years. In 1910, John Dewey wrote about the importance of training pupils to think in 'How We Think'. Ever since, the value of using thinking to stimulate and sustain learning in the classroom has been widely recognised. For some, it means involvement with specific programmes that treat thinking as a distinct area in which pupils' skills need to be developed. Others use thinking as a way of focusing attention on the everyday processes through which we all learn. Much of the practice now recognised as assessment for learning is essentially about effective communication between teachers and their pupils focused on gathering evidence of current learning and then sharing comments and advice as feedback to support improvements. These interactions

depend on thoughtful interventions and responses by everyone involved. Participants need to be able to interpret and evaluate evidence before providing feedback and this is unlikely to happen without some training in the skills involved and AifL provides a valuable context in which they can be developed.

Unit A2: Making Thinking Explicit discusses a range of ideas about how thinking in the classroom can be developed to good effect.

#### Slide 6

The definition in the report is not entirely new but it does suggest the need for a national consensus and that “how the curriculum is taught” is as important as “what is to be learned”. This definition establishes an important connection between ACfE and AifL. The Principles of Assessment is for Learning (2002) suggested that ... the process of learning has to be in the minds of both learner and teacher when assessment is planned and when the evidence is interpreted. Learners should become as aware of the ‘HOW?’ of their learning as they are of the ‘WHAT?’

It is also important because it explicitly extends the aim of the curriculum beyond conveying *knowledge* to promoting *values*, *understanding* and *capabilities*. In effect, this shifts the emphasis from consideration of what has been called curriculum content towards a recognition that we need to reflect too on the processes and approaches we use to ‘deliver’ curriculum content.

These and other issues are considered in greater detail in Unit C2: Engaging Purposes, Principles and Practice.

#### Slide 7

It is always a good idea to start with aims. A challenging question for all who work in schools is “can you write down your establishment’s aims...verbatim?” Most people can’t; so what is the function of aims. The Curriculum Review Group responsible

for the original Curriculum for Excellence report took the UNESCO aims as its starting point: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be.

The messages conveyed by these aims are that the curriculum is no longer simply about subject content. Its interest now extends to wider purposes: it contributes to the preparation of young people for their adult lives, it addresses affective as well as cognitive objectives like motivation and self-esteem, it acknowledges the variety of influences that assessment can exert on learning.

#### Slide 8

These four purposes are now well-nigh ubiquitous in Scottish schools. We need to look beyond these headings towards the characteristics and the dispositions which underpin them in the original document. To what extent are these consistent with AifL, for example? How can all of them be achieved in our classrooms? Will some be fostered more efficaciously in an inter-disciplinary, or even cross-sectoral, context?

Questions like these lead directly into a central concern of The Highland Council Reflection Framework: if learning objectives are to be judged desirable not just because of their contribution to subject based learning but also in terms of their role in developing wider purposes, then *how* we pursue such objectives in the classroom is no less important than the learning they may describe. To achieve the purposes of A Curriculum for Excellence, we need to reflect on and review the values we bring into the classroom and the principles and approaches we adopt when working with children and young people. To do this successfully, we need to approach the process in a spirit of critical self-evaluation typical of reflective professionals. The materials in The Highland Council Reflection Framework have been designed to support this.

The capacities and dispositions used to describe successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors acknowledge explicitly and implicitly the importance of developing greater engagement in the classroom through encouraging thinking for all. Few, if any of the descriptions provided can be realised without thoughtful engagement and interaction by learners themselves.

#### Slide 9

##### Activity 1

##### Purposes and thinking

The previous slide identified a number of personal capacities typical of successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

In groups, review these capacities. Which clearly depend on the ability to think in specific ways?  
How do you help pupils to learn how to do this at present?

#### Slide 10

Work on The Highland Council Learning and Teaching Reflection Framework began by exploring how formative assessment could be embedded in everyday classroom practice. The conclusion was that it would happen, not just because teachers had found better ways to teach, but also because pupils had learned better ways to learn. Foremost among these is peer and self-assessment; to be able to do these effectively, pupils must have a secure *understanding* of what it is they are learning. It is essential to deep learning, to learning how to learn (metacognition) and to being able to perform one's understanding in new and unfamiliar contexts.

If there has been a tendency to see assessment for learning as being essentially about good teaching, we may need to look more closely at the crucial importance of assessment by pupils themselves. The idea of embedding formative assessment by developing pupil self-assessment is more

fully explored in Unit B1: So What are the Pupils Doing? It is then used to extend self-assessment into personal learning planning in Unit C1: Around the AifL Triangle.

Recent HMIE reports have also focused on the need to give pupils more responsibility for their own learning.

## Session 2

### CPD and the Reflective Professional

#### Slide 11

In essence, the values, purposes and principles introduced by a Curriculum for Excellence provide teachers with criteria to help them plan, build and evaluate the programmes of study and learning experiences that will stimulate and sustain their pupils' learning. In doing so, they acknowledge that learning should meet, not just subject-based objectives but also the wider needs of a fast changing world and that, to engage with the issues involved, we should reflect on both what we teach and how we teach it. The extent to which this will be possible will depend on the extent to which teachers are able to create a climate that values mistakes as opportunities to learn and high quality interactions in the classroom as the best way of doing it.

Session 2 looks at what might be involved in addressing some of the issues involved.

#### Slide 12

In achieving all that *A Curriculum for Excellence* promises, we will need teachers who are genuinely reflective professionals. This will involve a collaborative, collegiate approach in our schools. Opening up our classroom doors, working across the sectors, working in inter-disciplinary teams, etc.

Michael Fullan has argued we have a moral obligation to share our good practice with others. Learning from one another is essential. Is it sensible in this day and age that two teachers of different subjects could begin their career in the same secondary

school, teach for 40 years and retire, never having seen each other teach!

CPD needs to become the vehicle for teachers to develop the habit of professional reflection. The new, wider definition of CPD which has emerged since the McCrone agreement, offers a good framework for teachers to reflect with colleagues in a collegiate context. In this mix should be research evidence and advice from sources outside of the schools (SEED, LTS, LAs, etc.). Teachers should engage with such advice – but not uncritically. School improvement through self-evaluation offers ways in which such engagement can be promoted and this reflection framework can support the development of these approaches.

Unit A2: Promoting and Sustaining Change looks closely at the factors, including the form of CPD adopted, most likely to support and sustain effective change in schools and classrooms.

#### Slide 13

Pedagogy, the theory and practice of teaching, is at the heart of professional practice. Scottish teachers, given the time and the support, are willing to engage with ideas (witness 1250 teachers on a Friday at a Tapestry conference to listen to Howard Gardner, a Harvard academic). Reflective professionals have a rationale for what they do; they are learning still, and they give their pupils a rich and convincing model of what it is to be a learner.

#### Slide 14

Climate is not a matter of accident. Teachers, over time, in discussion with colleagues, through reading and reflection, develop a value system. Believing that all children have the potential to be successful learners is at the heart of our professionalism. High expectations of all learners and consistency in our relationships with them are crucial.

#### Slide 15

We know a lot more about learning today than at any time in recent history. David Perkins' emphasis on *understanding* is helpful, and peer and self-assessment are the key to AifL. We need to address the 'final frontier' of intelligence and help pupils to confront failure in a positive way. In doing so, we may learn how to meet the needs of *all* pupils, not the able few.

Each of these emphasise the importance of a learner's involvement in her/his own learning. The process of taking greater control of one's own learning is closely related to the ideas of personal learning planning which are explored more fully in Unit C1: Around the AifL triangle. This unit also provides an opportunity to look more closely at the work of Carol Dweck which helps us to understand how the mindsets that we have (self-theories) about things like our intelligence can either help or hinder our efforts to learn new things.

Unit B2: Making Thinking Explicit offers an opportunity to explore metacognition in some depth.

#### Slide 16

The learning classroom would certainly have these characteristics but perhaps we could improve on this list? What we are looking for is a set of objectives that all teachers could pursue across a term or year thus enabling them, perhaps with the addition of some 'inserts', to ensure that citizenship, better behaviour better learning, enterprise etc, were being promoted.

The Highland Council Reflection Framework has been designed to help schools explore much of this: Units B1, C1 and C2 look at how AifL can be embedded and extended. Unit C2 makes specific connections with A Curriculum for Excellence. Unit B2 is about developing thinking and Unit A2 takes participants through the issues involved in developing CPD approaches most like to influence classroom practice.

## Slide 17

If the learning classroom can promote opportunities for wider learning experiences as suggested in the previous slide, inter-disciplinary learning could be another important vehicle in delivering both the purposes of ACfE and the objectives of other national initiatives.

The first question to ask is what value will be added by approaching this topic (whatever it is) in an inter-disciplinary way rather than through individual subjects? Will the contribution of the subjects/disciplines be identifiable? Will it help learners to make connections, to transfer their skills to new situations, to synthesize from a range of sources, to better understand the significance of what they're learning?

Secondly, if pupils can address big issues in an inter-disciplinary way, what are the advantages? Will they arrive at a deeper understanding of the inter-relatedness of knowledge? Will they understand the different traditions and perspectives (e.g. the historical and the scientific?) Can teachers collaborate in ways which will bring learning to life for pupils in a rich and challenging way?

Thirdly, can we avoid the pitfalls of superficial and contrived 'forced marriages' of topics? Can we retain the contribution of the subjects and traditions? Can we resist any organisational or managerial coming together of unlikely subjects?

## Slide 18

Enterprise, the focus of Determined to Succeed, is a good example of the potential available in adopting an inter-disciplinary approach. The words and phrases on this slide would not be out of place in AifL, ACfE or in thinking skills approaches. '...take responsibility', 'relevance and purpose of the task is understood' and, of course, 'can-do attitude' would be visible in a learning classroom.

## Slide 19

Could we change the heading here and keep the same list of characteristics? Where would the connections be with the four purposes (or 'capacities') of A Curriculum for Learning?

## Slide 20

This is a good description of an enterprising school. Probably a thinking school, or a learning school, or a creative school or even an 'effective' school might aspire to a similar set of descriptors.

These offer a good starting point for a thorough-going discussion in any school about how far its current approaches support such a vision.

## Slide 21

## Activity 2

The enterprising classroom

In groups, compile a list of what you would expect to find evidence of in an enterprising classroom.

Are the things you've included in your list specific to Enterprise and to Enterprise alone. Are they more generic and relevant in other areas? Does this have implications for classroom practice? If so, what?

## Slide 22

The so-called year of engagement with teachers is over but does more need to be done to ensure that all teachers are fully conversant with A Curriculum for Excellence? How should initiatives such as Assessment for Learning be used to support A Curriculum for Excellence.

The Highland Council Learning and Teaching Reflection Framework has been devised to help schools and teachers to think about how some of the opportunities described on this slide can be further exploited.

## Slide 23

Hargreaves and Hopkins, cited in Boyd, 2005, (see supplementary reading in this unit) offer a succinct ‘manifesto’ for the ways in which schools can create a culture of reflection and collegiate working. These offer a good starting point for a thorough-going discussion in any school about how far its current approaches support such a vision.

Unit A2: Promoting and Sustaining Change offers significant opportunities to explore this area and further reading is also provided.

#### Slide 23

So, what next steps might help us engage in this? Creating opportunities for teachers to share their expertise, initially on a voluntary, “only feedback positives” basis could be step one. This could well extend beyond sharing ideas to active dialogue on their implications and peer observation to spread practice.

Step two would be engaging teachers and pupils in evaluating classroom practice by testing them against the four underpinning principles on which this framework is based: how do they help stimulate or sustain participation, dialogue, engagement, thinking. This could be a practical way of evaluating practice against the touchstones of “does it promote understanding?” or “does it lead to deep learning” or “is learning coherent across subjects?”

The third step is a school-wide focus on helping pupils take greater responsibility for their own learning, by giving them the skills to reflect on in and by engaging them in active learning approaches.

Finally, the continuity, coherence and progression which 5-14 singularly failed to deliver, may be within our grasp. They could become reality when the principles which underpin AifL are embedded within the practice of Scottish teachers and when these are complemented by the ideas which have emerged over the last 40 years or so of

research into the role of thinking in the classroom. Making thinking and understanding the focus of all of our classrooms and enabling pupils to learn how to learn, will ensure that the vision of A Curriculum for Excellence is realised.

#### Slide 24

The concept of the ‘thinking classroom’ brings together the ideas of the reflective professional and the thinking child. The classroom is where they interact and thinking is visible. It is part of the culture of the classroom; the vocabulary of thinking is everywhere and the rationale for thinking is made explicit. Thus, as AifL reminds us that sharing the learning outcomes with pupils is crucial, teachers use this as a way of negotiating with pupils not just what is to be learned but how it can be learned. And learning is ‘deep’ learning, with a focus on *understanding*. Pupils are given opportunities to perform their understanding on an ongoing basis and peer and self-assessment is at the heart of thinking to learn. The teacher models the conduct of a thinker. Embedding and extending formative assessment and making the connection to the development of thinking in our pupils will allow schools in Highland Council to realise the vision of A Curriculum for Excellence. The Highland Council Reflection Framework is a context for CPD which aims to empower teachers to share their professional expertise in a collegiate culture and to continue to improve the quality of learning and teaching in their classrooms.

To support school-based work, the three sections of the framework – managing transformational change, embedding formative assessment and extending formative assessment - will be used as the basis for The Highland Council’s own programme of courses and seminars for 2007 – 8.