

Engaging with the Highland Model

Presentation Notes

The PowerPoint presentation has been designed to show how the Highland model can be used to help foster the CfE capacities through the principles and practice of formative assessment and as such provide a coherent structure for learning, teaching and assessment.

A Highland journey 2004 - 2009

(slides 1 – 3)

The first slide provides an opportunity to indicate that the model and associated Framework was developed over the last five sessions by a number of complementary teacher learning communities working collaboratively with a number of leading thinkers and researchers. The second slide addresses the central purpose of the model which is to help young people take greater responsibility for their own learning. The next slide highlights the first two general aims of the Highland journey. The diagrams in these slides highlight the principles and practice of formative assessment, in particular, the centrality of thinking and peer and self assessment in the development of the model. The need to foster critical and creative thinking and autonomous learners is also emphasised.

Slides

- 1 During session 2005-2006 groups of SMT and practitioners from primary and secondary began to explore (i) what it means to embed formative assessment in the classroom and (ii) how we can meaningfully extend the developing ideas and practices in order to foster the CfE capacities.
- 2 As a result of these discussions Highland secured Future Learning and Teaching (FLaT) funding to develop a coherent structural model for learning, teaching and assessment.
- 3 The model in Highland's LTA policy is based on the first two aims of the journey
 - develop a coherent conception of formative assessment
 - explore the links between formative assessment and approaches to making thinking explicit as a powerful way of fostering the capacities.

The first aim resulted in a focus on the principles and practice of formative assessment – essentially the right and left hand sides of the model. The second aim focussed on how this conception of formative assessment can be used to meaningfully explore what it means to help pupils take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Discussion question

In what ways do you currently explore and/or develop the links between AifL and Curriculum for Excellence?

Reflective professionals and thinking children (slides 4 & 5)

The evaluation of the Highland Future Learning and Teaching (FLaT) project highlighted that there were in fact two models in use in Highland (i) the pedagogical model and (ii) a model of innovation based on high quality teacher / teacher interaction. This resonates strongly with the initial aim of the journey which was the need to create opportunities for reflective professionals if we wished to help pupils to become better thinkers. Slide 4 highlights this with reference to BtC 1. Slide five outlines our thinking skills perspective on

the capacities. It was crucial to addressing the second aim of the journey and is consistent with one of the main recommendations of BtC 3. This focus on fostering higher order thinking skills also resonates with Improving Scottish Education (HMIe, 2008).

Slides

- 4 From the beginning it was agreed that developing and sustaining high quality teacher/pupil and especially pupil/pupil dialogue would require teachers to be encouraged to engage in high quality professional dialogue, reading and reflection with colleagues in order to explore and share ideas and practices. This was subsequently highlighted in BtC 1 as the need for teachers to ‘exemplify the CfE capacities’.
- 5 One of the fundamental questions considered from the outset was what does it mean to foster the CfE capacities? We took a very broad thinking skills perspective on the four capacities and concentrated on the attributes and capabilities underneath each heading. This resonated with the suggestion subsequently raised in BtC 3 to focus on the ‘indicative descriptors’. This slide shows how we have organised these indicative descriptors into dispositions and critical and creative thinking and information handling. This aspect of the model is highlighted by the paper written by Robert Fisher in collaboration with Highland teachers ‘Fostering the CfE capacities – Thinking to learn: learning to think’ This paper is accompanied by a booklet Tools for Thinking containing 30 thinking strategies based on the above headings.

Discussion question

In what ways might you use the indicative descriptors to foster the CfE capacities?

Developing the model

(slides 6 – 8)

The next three slides focus on the build up of the distinctive pedagogical model. The first of these slides outlines the principles of formative assessment which have been incorporated into the Highland Learning, Teaching and Assessment policy. The need to engage with principles was highlighted by research from the early stages of the Assessment is for Learning programme as well as by the Highland SMT and practitioners groups during session 2005 – 2006. The groups agreed that whatever embedding formative assessment means it was not simply based on using more strategies. The next slide highlights the centrality of peer and self assessment as articulated in both the Inside the Black Box and the recent work of Prof John Hattie that identified peer and self-assessment as being the most effective form of classroom interaction from a total of 138. Over the last few years Highland has explored this aspect of the model in the upper secondary stages and was analysed by the SQA in their report ‘Just making them think’. The final slide in this section shows how the principles and practice of formative assessment can enable teachers to meaningfully address the need to help pupils take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Slides

- 6 In 2005 a report into the success of the developing AifL programme highlighted a number of issues that needed to be addressed for real embedding to take place. One of the most significant issues was the need to engage with a set of underlying principles as well as the surface strategies. The four principles can be used to inform and evaluate formative assessment strategies.

- 7 As well as focusing on a clear set of principles we revisited the ideas and practice from ‘Inside the black box’ and identified peer and self assessment as a significant feature of formative assessment.
- 8 The principles and practice of formative assessment (right and left hand sides of the model) gave us a structure within which we could meaningfully explore what it means to help pupils take greater responsibility for their own learning.

NB During session 2007 – 2008 Prof Paul Black shared with us his developing conception of formative assessment based on the centrality of dialogue, thinking and self assessment. This clearly resonates with some of the central strands of our developing model. His paper ‘Full Marks for Feedback’, referenced in this part of the Framework, highlights the need for a shift in emphasis from the role of the teachers questioning skills to the quality of the resulting pupil dialogue.

Engagement Strategy

The three questions from the following slide could be used to stimulate a discussion over a number of meetings throughout the session. The attached Route to Engagement provides selected reading related to the three aspects of the model. Further information from the CPD Reflection Framework will be sent out after the Highland Learning Festival.

A Route to Engagement

(slide 9)

This slide highlights and begins to explore how we can engage with the three aspects of the Highland model. Each aspect of the model provides a way of engaging with some of the key issues and themes from the integrated model for learning, teaching and assessment.

Teacher learning communities

A central feature of the journey over the few sessions has been the creation of a number of complementary teacher learning communities. This strongly resonated with one of the key messages from the Assessment Reform Group with regard to meaningful and sustainable embedding of assessment for learning.

Professional Learning as a Condition for Assessment for Learning
Mary James & David Pedder

“In the end, change can only be embedded if teachers actively engage with the ideas and principles underpinning the advocated practices and if the environments in which they work are supporting such engagement.”