

What Happens When I Introduce the Traffic Light System of Self – Assessment to my Pupils?

Rationale

It has been largely agreed by researchers and professionals that, ‘assessment is vital to the education process’, (the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018). According to the OECD, introducing self – assessment to pupils promotes and encourages more active involvement from children towards their own learning. This idea is also discussed by Dylan Williams (2014), who suggests that self – assessment, ‘activates students as owners of their own learning’. Researchers have also suggested that formative assessment in the form of self – assessment can help teachers to highlight and focus on each child’s individual needs in order to implement effective teaching strategies for children to reach their full potential, (Williams, 2014). I decided to focus my practitioner enquiry on self – assessment in the form of traffic lights to encourage the children in my class to become more active in their learning which will hopefully promote further engagement and progress in learning.

Aims

The aim of this enquiry was to introduce a structured self – assessment strategy to measure the impact of self – assessment on pupil engagement and progress in their Taught Writing lessons. The enquiry was introduced to a class who were not as engaged in Taught Writing as they were in other aspects of literacy and therefore, little progress was being made. By introducing the traffic light self – assessment strategy to the class, it was hoped that the pupils would take more ownership of their learning, therefore encouraging engagement in learning which would hopefully promote the desired progress.

Methodology

The enquiry was carried out over a 4 week period with a primary three classroom consisting of 29 pupils, who had a range of individualised needs. This was a whole class investigation, which consisted of pupils with different Additional Support Needs (ASNs) when it came to literacy work. Some pupils were absent at times and this could therefore restrict results from those pupils.

The core writing targets were the focus for the writing lessons and each week, three targets were used as the success criteria for the lesson, which were shared with the class. The targets for the week were shared with the children before they were set on task, allowing children to focus on what they had to incorporate into their writing in order to be successful in their learning.

The Teacher acted as a facilitator, primarily working with the children with ASNs. The majority of the children were given sole responsibility for their learning and success. The success criteria was displayed for the children to see so that pupils could easily refer to the targets throughout their writing. When the children were finished their writing, they were encouraged to check their work against the success criteria before completing the next task.

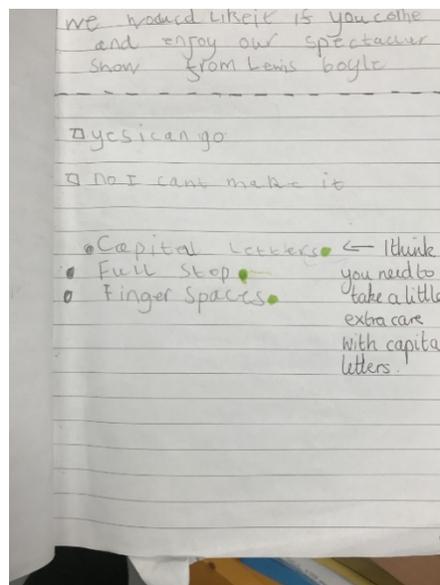
Once the whole class were finished to the best of their ability, the children were given 3D traffic light pyramids. On these pyramids, there was a red side, an orange side and a green side. Those children with ASNs were given the pyramids with the emotion faces, showing a happy face, a straight face and a sad face so that the assessment strategy met their individual needs.

The teacher would then go through each of the success criteria in turn and the pupils had to decide how well they had met that target. If the pupils believed that they had fully met a specific target, for example, the use of finger spaces in their writing, then they would turn their pyramid to green. If the pupils felt that they almost met the target, they would show orange and if they felt that they did not meet the target they would show red. The pupils with ASNs would show their faces as appropriate. Each pupil would then take note of their colours and would read over these marks before beginning their next piece of writing to remind themselves of what they need to improve on.

At the end of the 3 week research period, the children were provided with a simple survey to answer questions based on the effectiveness of the traffic light system as a form of self-assessment.

Findings

After each writing lesson, the children were asked to copy the success criteria into their jotters and to indicate, using the traffic lights, how well they thought they had met their targets. The image below (Image 1) shows that in the first few weeks of using the traffic light system, the children's indications did not match up the ability shown through their writing. For example, children were indicating a green for every target when in fact, the targets were



barely being met through their writing.

Image 1. Children were indication green when their true ability did not match.

As the weeks progressed, it became clear that the children were beginning to really think about their work and were beginning to focus on the targets provided as the children were checking their work against the success criteria and their traffic lights were showing an accurate representation of their work. Image number 2 was taken towards the end of the enquiry. This image shows the child indicating red for the use of capital letters and this was a true reflection of their writing on this day, shown through my later comment.

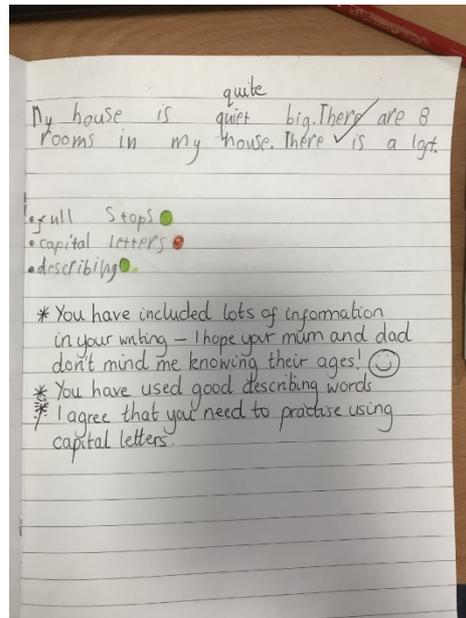


Image 2. This child showed an honest and true reflection of their work.

Furthermore, this particular child reflected over this target the following week and indicated green for the use of capital letters, which again was a true reflection of their writing (Image 3). This shows that the child had reflected over their previous work and has thought about how to improve their current learning.

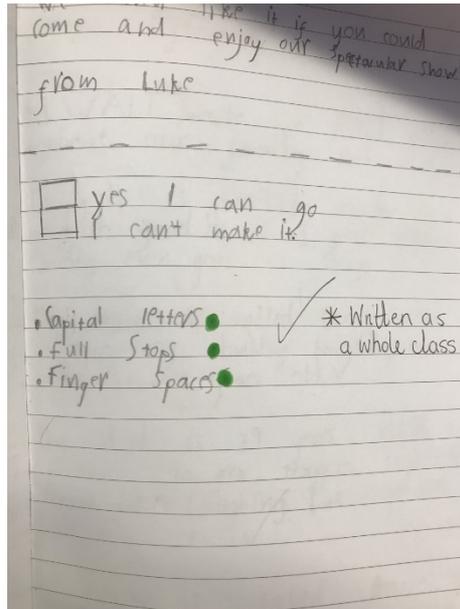


Image 3. This child reflected over their previous work and this led to improvements in their current work.

Towards the end of the enquiry, the children were presented with a simple, child friendly questionnaire, asking about their thoughts towards the traffic light system and if they felt that it had improved their writing. Below are some of the results.

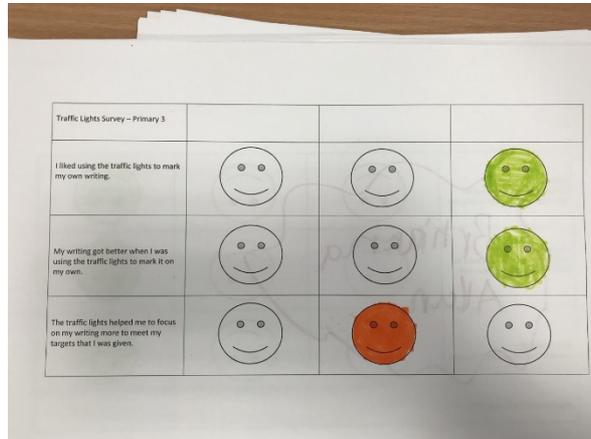


Image 4.

This child (image 4), although feeling that their work had improved through the use of the traffic lights, did not feel that the traffic lights helped them to focus on their writing targets. There are several reasons for this outcome. Perhaps the child is confident in the technicalities of writing and therefore did not need to focus on the writing targets or perhaps the writing targets were challenging for the child and they did not have the confidence to incorporate the targets into their writing, therefore having no reason to focus on them.

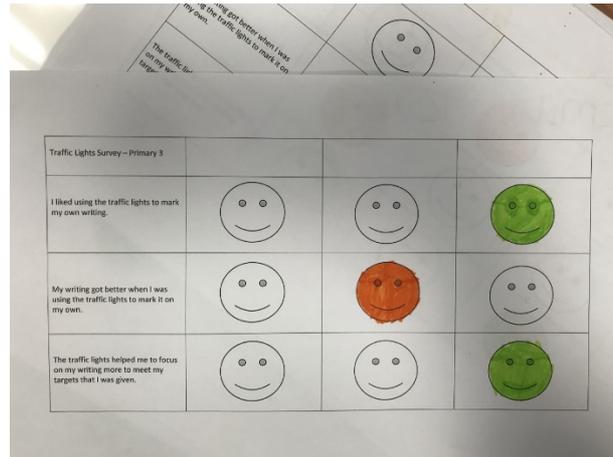


Image 5.

This child, (image 5), thought that the traffic light system did not fully improve their writing, however, did help them to focus more on their writing targets which may lead to a future improvement in writing. Again perhaps the child finds the writing targets challenging and may find it difficult when incorporating the technicalities into their writing. By continuing to focus on their writing targets, it is hoped that this child will begin to see improvements in their overall writing.

Conclusion

Overall, with regards to the data and information gathered throughout this enquiry, it can be concluded that introducing traffic lights as a form of self – assessment into the primary classroom can be an effective skill for the children to learn. It has been shown through this enquiry that the children became more focused and engaged in their writing throughout the course of the three week investigation, which led to significant improvements in the level of their writing. The children were focusing on the success criteria more and were providing honest reflections on the work they had produced, which meant that the children knew what they had to improve on in the next writing lesson. Those children who did not show signs of improvements in their writing by using the traffic lights were those children with Additional Support Needs and would therefore indicate that these children would continue to require additional learning support and may require more time to adjust to the method of self – assessment.

Implications for future practice

This investigation strengthened my awareness of the benefits and obstacles to using the traffic light system as a form of self – assessment. Although the majority of children did show signs of improvement in their writing as well as engagement in their learning, there were a small group of children who either showed little improvement or no improvement. In order for each child to thrive using traffic lights, there would need to be adjustments made, including more individualised targets for different ability groups and for the investigation to be carried out over a longer period of time for certain groups of children. I would be inclined

to use this method in other curricular areas in order to promote engagement and ownership in learning across the curriculum.

Bibliography

- Education Scotland. (2016). *Dylan William: Formative Assessment*, 15 July, viewed 27 February 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYdVe5O7KBE>
- OECD, (2018). *Assessment for Learning Formative Assessment*, OECD/CERI International Conference Learning in the 21st Century: Research, Innovation and Policy, viewed 2 March 2018, <https://www.oecd.org/site/educeri21st/40600533.pdf>