The Impact of a Checklist used to self-assess literacy tasks during online learning.

RATIONALE

Assessment is a natural and fundamental principle of effective learning and teaching in the primary classroom. It is an umbrella term that encompasses many elements of the role of a teacher including assessing children's understanding, planning for next steps and measuring pupil performance against targets and outcomes (Hargreaves, 2005). Assessment is for Learning (AiFL) is a process which has encouraged practitioners to consider the way in which assessment is used and built upon in the classroom environment. Clarke (2014) states the "most powerful educational tool for raising attainment and preparing children to be lifelong learners is formative assessment". Formative assessment encapsulates the vital elements of enhancing pupil's learning through clarification of learning intensions and success criteria, providing effective feedback in a variety of ways that will continue to progress learning, and motivating pupils to become leaders in their own learning (Leahy, et al, 2005). However, what happens when that role of teacher, as we know it is redefined and the opportunity for learning and teaching with face-to-face, verbal and instant feedback is removed? Metacognition is a skill in which children reflect on their own understanding and the process by which they got to that point. This skill is applied through the use of self-assessments in the case of this practitioner enquiry, the mode of self-assessment implemented was a checklist. Checklists were used as a form of self-assessing reading comprehension tasks. Checklists were chosen as a way of providing pupils with success criteria which they could then use to reflect on their own written tasks.

This area was chosen as the basis of my practitioner enquiry as an exploration of how we can assess reading remotely when we cannot listen and hear children read. This consideration was underpinned by the perception that reading comprehension tasks can allow us to explore how effectively children can decode words, use the narrative to visualise the story, apply understanding through prior knowledge, and evidence this in written tasks.

AIMS

The aim of this practitioner enquiry was to explore the effectiveness of using checklists as a mode of self-assessment on reading comprehension tasks while learning from home. Within this aim were two key questions.

- Will completing a checklist with pre-determined success criteria improve the standard of Read to Write tasks completed whilst learning online from home?
- Will using a checklist support pupils in forming their next steps for in reading comprehension tasks?

METHODOLOGY

This enquiry was conducted in Primary 4 class of 25 children with varying abilities and learning needs. The checklist was to be used as a self-assessment criteria following a weekly reading comprehension task based on each working group's reading book. As children were learning online and books could not be sent home, they were assigned through Oxford Owl which gave pupils the option to hear the book being read to them if necessary. The checklist was uploaded to our class Teams page. This was repeated on a weekly basis from week beginning the 1st of February until the 1st of March. The children were informed of the checklist and how to use it during Team meets, through messages and as a task on their weekly group learning overviews. The checklists were compiled of five success criteria (SC) which were to be marked with a tick or a cross. An example of the checklist is attached as Appendix 1.

Four forms of data were collated and analysed:

1. Completed checklists from pupils.
2. Teacher observation in relation to accuracy of checklist.
3. Teacher written feedback on children's work submitted through Teams assignments
4. Quantitative questionnaire through Google Forms on the effectiveness of using the checklist.

Our practitioner enquiry group had expressed concerns regarding the standard of written work submitted while learning online. From forgetting standard presentation layout such as including a heading, date or learning intention for their work, submitting one word answers for written tasks. From the outset of online learning, all members of our group identified a focus to maintain standard and progression of written work and increase motivational ownership of individual's learning. Due to the nature of online learning and engagement, our focus groups stemmed from those who were submitting completed checklists.

FINDINGS

Checklists

In relation to the first form of data collection, completed checklists, findings suggested that children understood and applied the checklists as a mode of self-assessment and were able to recognise where they had or had not met the success criteria indicating this with a tick or a cross. Despite the small sample size, there was noticeable improvements in the presentation of written work. This may be due to the clear, measureable nature of the first two success criteria in the checklist.

Amongst the 5 success criteria in the checklist, 2 were literal and 3 were based on the children's judgement. Undoubtedly, it would be easier to reflect on whether you wrote the learning intention and remembered core targets, than to consider did you give a detailed answer as each child's standard of work would differ causing blurred lines between what you would consider marking with a tick or a cross. For this to be implemented effectively

in the future, it would be of benefit to the learner's to explore and discuss how to effectively evaluate their own work.

A challenge faced in the implementation of this enquiry was access to resources to complete the checklist regularly. When planning and resourcing for all online learning, I had to consider how work would be completed. It was highlighted in previous lockdowns that children would not have access to a printer so any learning or task that was planned for them in terms of written work would have to be done independently, meaning at times work would have to be drawn onto paper. This was the case with the checklists and potentially could have had an impact on the number of children not completing them as they were viewed as additional work over and above core learning.

Teacher Observation of accuracy of self-assessment

The majority of completed checklists were accurate in terms of their reflection on the written task. Learners were able to effectively evaluate their written work and were confident in identifying where they had not met the SC. This was particularly noticeable in the SC asking if children gave a detailed answer. In examining the completed checklists, I found that when the children recorded their own next steps, these were not related to the SC contained in the checklist and included next steps such as making handwriting neater.

Written teacher feedback

Pupils were asked to take photos of the literacy tasks and submit these using Microsoft Teams Assignments. This allowed me to provide private, written feedback. Despite pupils identifying aspects of the SC which they had not met (marked with a cross) I found myself continuing to write the same feedback each week. This coincided with what the pupil had identified themselves in the majority of cases, however did not have the desired effect of highlighting developing next steps to focus on for the next week.

Of the seven children who regularly completed the checklist, two showed noticeable improvement in the detail provided in their written answers to understanding questions. In analysis of these results, I found that the children who showed such improvement are from the same working group. I included this as my written feedback to these children using the school's SA policy of +/-/=. Examples are included below.

"Wow! I love your answers to the comprehension questions! +"

"Great answers to your comprehension questions! +"

"You have answered your comprehension questions wonderfully! +"

Questionnaire

Conducting this enquiry with the majority of children working from home presented issues with engagement. In the post-enquiry questionnaire which was completed by 7/25 pupils, only one pupil stated they had used it every week, five stated they sometimes used it while one stated they had not used it at all however did state that the checklists would be useful

to implement in class. One child regularly used the checklist however did not complete the questionnaire.

5/7 children who completed the questionnaire said they found the checklist useful in assessing and improving their work. Additionally, 6/7 children said they would find the checklist useful in class.

CONCLUSION

Checklists can be a useful method of self-assessing work as they are clear, concise and allow children to reflect on the expectations they have of their own work without comparing themselves with others. This was reflected in the accuracy between self and teacher assessment and feedback.

A number of challenges hindered this enquiry which could be overcome in a different setting such as engagement and having copies of the checklists printed. This is supported by the high percentage of children who in their post intervention questionnaire stated they would find the questionnaire useful in class.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE

Pupils have shown they are able to identify criteria they have not met, but are unsure of how to approach using these to develop next steps. In relation to this, due to the nature of this enquiry and using online learning it would be more beneficial to respond to the next steps identified in a classroom environment as a potential issue may be that children need to be taught and supported in meeting these next steps.

A vital implication I have found is the importance of time given to look back on previous self-assessment and how this can identify a focus for new tasks. This was highlighted in the repetitive identification of the same SC learners were not meeting.

Completing self-assessment checklists are easy when the criteria are easy to measure and can be represented by a yes/no or tick/cross response. Issues can arise when self-assessment is based on judgement. It would be beneficial for pupils to be taught how to self-assess their own work by their own judgement increasing ownership and motivation in their learning.

There are benefits to co-creating the success criteria with pupils as part of a learning experience to identify the important parts of written work. According to Clarke (2014) the potential for this is done most effectively when the learning intention and success criteria are not automatically shared at the start of a lesson but when they are explored through incomplete and/or good examples of work.

<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>

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Understanding Reading Checklist

Did you write the title, date, and LI?	
Remembered capital letters and full stops?	
Remembered to answer in a sentence? Did you use the question to help you?	
Were you able to find the information in your book independently?**	
Did you give a detailed/descriptive answer?	

*** Independently means by yourself*