



# Current Challenges in AfL

---

Sue Swaffield

University of Cambridge

RNLC 7th annual conference

15 October 2009



# Outline

---

Authentic AfL - justifying  
- conceptualising  
- practising

Generating creative possibilities

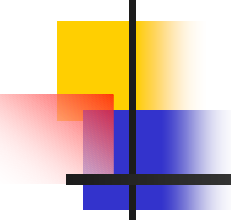
Issues for school leadership



# Why 'authentic' AfL?

---

A bit of history ...

- 
- ARG commissioned Black and William review (1998)
  - King's Medway Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project
  - Many schools, LAs, individuals etc
  - ARG AfL definition, principles, booklets
  - Learning How to Learn
  - The AfL Strategy
  - **Third International Conference on AfL**



# Strategies associated with AfL

---

- Using assessment information to inform planning
- Sharing learning intentions, success criteria and examples of 'quality'
- Questioning and dialogue
- Feedback
- Self and peer assessment
- Improving work in progress
- Formative use of summative assessment



# AfL definition

---

...is a process  
of seeking and interpreting evidence  
for use  
by learners and their teachers  
to decide where the learners are in their learning,  
where they need to go,  
and how best to get there.

(Assessment Reform Group, 2002)



# Principles of AfL

---

- Part of planning
- Focus on how students learn
- Central to classroom practice
- Key professional skill
- Sensitive and constructive
- Importance of learner motivation
- Sharing goals and criteria
- Guidance on how to improve
- Develops capacity for self-assessment
- Recognises all achievement (ARG, 2002)



# AfL imperatives/principles

---

- **Making learning explicit**
- **Promoting learning autonomy**
- **Focusing on learning** (rather than performance, grades, marks, levels)  
(Learning How to Learn)



# AfL practices

---

In the spirit  
or  
in the letter  
of AfL?



# The AfL Strategy

---

The Assessment for Learning Strategy emphasises testing and making ‘accurate assessments linked to National Curriculum levels’ (‘Assessing Pupils’ Progress’).

The relational, pedagogical, pupil responsibility aspects of AfL are sidelined.

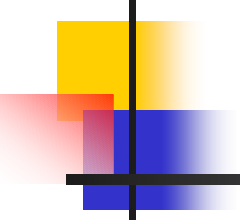


# The AfL Strategy according to the Minister

---

'In order to help those [teachers] who do not [use tests appropriately] and to improve best practice generally, we are investing £150 million over the next three years on assessment for learning to improve the way in which the tests are used'

(Jim Knight 18 February 2008,  
evidence to the Select Committee Ev 178 Q329)



---

'Clarification is important  
because the claimed advantages  
[of formative assessment]  
only apply to authentic  
interpretations'

(Black et al., 2003, p122).



# AfL definition (2nd generation)

---

...is part of everyday practice  
by students, teachers and peers  
that seeks, reflects on and responds to  
information  
from dialogue, demonstration and observation  
in ways that enhance ongoing learning.

(Third International Conference on Assessment for Learning, 2009)



---

# **Reflecting on and evaluating putative AfL practice**

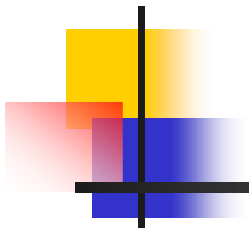
(using the handout that picks up issues  
on the next slide))



# Evaluating practice

---

- Making learning explicit
- Promoting learning autonomy
- A learning rather than a performance orientation
  
- The 'spirit' or the 'letter' or AfL?
  
- Learner identity and theories of self
- Roles of teacher and pupils



---

***Authentic***  
**Assessment**  
**for**  
**Learning**



---

# **Creative possibilities in learning, the curriculum, and AfL**

(group activity)



# Authentic AfL

## Issues for school leadership

---

- Understanding and valuing
- Knowing about practice
- Promoting authentic AfL
- Being aware of consultants' messages
- Supporting teachers' collaborative enquiry
- Asking and observing pupils



# 'The misrepresentation of AfL'

---

Sue Swaffield 2009

Paper available from

[www.leadershipforlearning.org.uk](http://www.leadershipforlearning.org.uk)

Other very useful material available on

[www.aaia.org.uk](http://www.aaia.org.uk)

with links to other sites