

## Briefing Paper for Trainee Teachers Of Citizenship Education

### Assessing Citizenship Education

Produced by citizED  
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## Assessing Citizenship Education

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### Key issues in assessment

Assessment is controversial in many subjects and debates rage about the suitable balance between content and process and between continuous assessment and terminal exam. Citizenship teachers share these debates, and have additional issues to resolve, concerning the place of assessment in our unique subject.

#### Key Issue 1: Are we assessing citizens?

It is important to clarify for ourselves and young people that assessment in school is concerned with Citizenship Education, not their citizenship status – teachers should not be seen as ‘failing’ young people as citizens. Practically this distinction can be drawn if teachers continue the good practice established in other subjects of setting and sharing clear learning objectives for each project or lesson, so pupils understand the nature of the learning and the focus and purpose of subsequent assessment.

#### Key Issue 2: The content v process debate

Are we primarily concerned with helping young people develop new knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues, or with equipping them with the skills to practice effective citizenship? The answer of course is that we must develop both, because one serves the other. This means our assessment strategies must be flexible enough to accommodate both areas. It may be the case that different styles of assessment are adopted at different points in a course to focus primarily on content or skills, but teachers must always be aware of how assessment relates to both.

#### Key Issue 3: Assessment without levels

Other national curriculum subjects have attainment targets divided into eight level descriptors. These levels provide ‘best fit’ descriptions of pupils’ attainment at the end of each key stage. Citizenship teachers instead have to make a judgement about whether pupils’ are working towards, at, or beyond the single attainment target for their key stage. This is a different way of working, and is unfamiliar to many teachers, but provides freedom to develop flexible and task specific assessment schemes. (see page 3)

#### Key Issue 4: Assessment for / of learning

The debates about assessment in education have been shifting in recent years. On the one hand there is more summative testing than ever before, but on the other, Black and Williams’ work on formative assessment has become profoundly influential with teachers, the DfES and QCA. This has pushed the focus firmly back on the role of assessment in the everyday teaching and learning process. This is an important area to develop in teaching practice and provides a richer understanding of the role of assessment than the summative focus on testing, exams and grades. (see page 2)

#### Key Issue 5: Assessment and recording

One of the requirements of the programmes of study for Citizenship is for pupils to reflect on their experiences. This means that assessment has to move beyond simply recording the fact of

participation and begin to get inside the learning that happens as a result. Whilst photographs and diaries might be used to describe events, it is important to plan opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning as well. This will enable you to make judgements about the pupils' learning and to differentiate between different pupils' attainment during a project. (see page 4)

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## Useful links and resources

### **www.qca.org.uk**

- Citizenship at key stages 1-4: Guidance on assessment, recording and reporting
- Examples of materials for teachers
- Citizenship: A scheme of work for key stage 3: Teacher's guide & Unit 19
- Assessment for Learning pages

### **www.ncaction.org.uk**

- Pupils' work with teacher commentaries

### **www.citized.info**

- Ruth Deakin Crick *Citizenship, Life Long Learning and Assessment*
- Peter Brett *GCSE Cit. Short Courses: A briefing paper and progress report*
- Lee Jerome *Planning Assessment for Citizenship Education*

### **www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk**

- A useful section on assessment from the Association for Citizenship Teaching

Paul Black et al (2003) *Assessment for Learning: Putting it into practice* Maidenhead: Open University Press

## **Assessment for learning (AfL) in the classroom**

This section is about embedding formative assessment in teaching practice. It draws on the assessment for learning research on the QCA website.

### **How do I know when I am doing AfL in Citizenship?**

Teachers implementing the principles of AfL:

- Actively involve pupils in their learning and assessment
- Provide effective feedback to pupils to help them understand how to improve
- Recognise the impact assessment has on self-esteem and motivation
- Adjust teaching to take account of the results of assessment

### **Involving pupils, some starting points for training and reflection**

One of the distinctive features of Citizenship is that the first of these principles is built in to the subject. Section 3c in the programmes of study requires pupils to 'reflect on the process of participating', which means Citizenship teachers have to understand how to help young people become active in their own assessment.

Pupils can also be involved in their own assessment in the classroom too, as part of your everyday teaching. Try some of the following in the classroom and reflect on what happens. It may be useful to invite a mentor or colleague to observe you when you are consciously trying out a new strategy:

- Build in 'thinking time' when you ask a question. Let everyone think about their response and then select people to contribute their answer – don't ask for hands up. How does this affect the pace of the lesson? The quality of responses? The involvement of pupils?

- ‘Bounce’ questions round the room by taking one answer and asking another pupil what they think and why. Extend the questions you ask by thinking about Bloom’s taxonomy (see the briefing sheet on questioning). Remember not to simply accept correct answers but to ask for reasons why they are right. The explanations provide opportunities to involve more pupils, and to explore justifications (promoting skills 2a and b).
- Practice ways of responding to wrong answers. Reflect on what you say and do in response to errors and how pupils respond. You need to clarify mistakes and if someone gets it wrong the reasons need to be explored, as well as seeking the right answer subsequently. Pupils should not be afraid of mistakes.
- Select a lesson within a medium term plan to include opportunities for peer review. You could set up ‘critical partners’ to review one another’s work as part of an editing phase. Record the comments and the subsequent responses within each pair. How does it differ from the feedback you would provide? Has it helped pupils make progress? How does receiving a comment help pupils? And how are pupils helped by making a comment?
- Build in time and processes for self assessment and reflection on learning. Self evaluation is not easy and you have to plan to help pupils do it. Creating simple proforma can help to structure pupils’ thoughts about an experience. It can also be useful to indicate what success might look like, so pupils can make informed judgements about their work.
- Review the learning objectives at the end of the lesson. Ask pupils to tell you what they have learned and how it links to the learning objectives you set at the beginning of the lesson. To what extent have the objectives been met? And to what extent are your planned objectives for next lesson still appropriate?
- Ask pupils to review their progress within the lesson as you go. Using ‘traffic lights’ can help you identify who is ready to move on and who might need extra help. Pupils can hold up a red card if they are not sure, an amber card if they think they have understood and a green card if they feel confident. This might enable you to re-group pupils for part of the lesson to focus attention where it is needed, or direct questions accurately.

For further ideas download *Training materials for the foundation subjects* (Sept, 2002) at: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/)

### **Assessing written work**

Much of the assessment described in the previous section is informal and helps to make teaching more effective. In addition, there are times when you will want to make a more formal assessment of work completed in class.

### **Planning to assess written work**

Planning lessons individually and constructing a test at the end to check factual recall is poor practice. Good teachers are more likely to start their planning with a clear idea of the outcome(s) from a unit of work (differentiated to reflect the age and ability of the pupils in the class) and then construct lessons that lead to them.

Once you have thought about the kinds of outcomes that are achievable you can create mark schemes or level descriptors for responses to the specific project you are developing. Creating an appropriate and useful scheme requires a thorough understanding of the issues being

assessed and of the pupils' learning. In trying to ensure your assessment is consistent with other subjects, you should remember the QCA advises that the KS3 attainment target is roughly equivalent to NC level 5 expectations.

**An example: *Why is it so difficult to keep the peace in the world today?***

This example is taken from Unit 11 in the key stage 3 QCA scheme of work (you can view the full scheme at [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk)). The unit includes detailed outcomes statements, but the following extracts indicate one aspect of the differences envisaged between pupils' work.

Attainment target: Pupils show how the public gets information and how opinion is formed and expressed, including through the media.

Unit 11 outcomes:

All pupils use some media sources to find out about contemporary events.

Most pupils evaluate how the media sources both inform and affect our understanding of global issues.

Some pupils demonstrate an ability to evaluate and use a wide range of media sources and recognise how media presentation affects our understanding and opinions.

The step from the first to the second level seems clear – pupils move from 'using' media sources, to 'evaluating' them. The next step re-states that pupils 'demonstrate an ability to evaluate', although they are required to do so in relation to a 'wide range' of sources. In this example we might want to explore just what is meant by the key word 'evaluate'. It is a high level thinking skill and is unlikely to be grasped readily by all key stage 3 pupils. So, what will they DO with these media sources when they are evaluating them? They might:

- identify similarities and differences between two or more sources.
- differentiate between 'fact' and 'opinion'.
- comment on the nature of the political bias of a source – whose side is it on?
- identify different methods used by the author to create a political interpretation of events.

Each of these might require a different type of teaching activity, and would need to be indicated clearly as points to consider in the assessed piece of work. Without such clear planning and instructions, it would be almost accidental if pupils 'hit the target'.

It might be useful to try to write some detailed descriptions of the types of answers you would expect in this unit, to act as a guide for your marking. Discussing such ideas with colleagues can be a valuable training experience, and history colleagues will certainly have lots to say about pupils evaluating sources of information.

**Marks and comments**

It would be easy to work with these 3 levels to create a numerical mark scheme – work at the first level could be awarded 1-3 marks; 4-6 for work in the middle; and 7-9 for the top; with 10 reserved for exceptional work. This might make it easy to complete a column in the teacher's mark book, but how would it help the pupils?

Comments that clearly indicate the strengths of the work and highlight areas for development are more likely to fulfil the criteria for effective AfL outlined on the previous page. Providing

clear, concise and useful comments requires the teacher to have a thorough understanding of the topic, but helps maintain a formative focus.

### Other issues to consider

This page has only touched on one aspect of assessing written work. You should also consider: how pupils are involved in the process, either in assessing the final product, or setting the assessment criteria with you; how this is recorded; how it is moderated; and how you monitor future progress in relation to targets set.

### Assessing work in the community

Many of the points discussed in relation to assessing written work are valid for community participation. The key principles to remember in effective assessment are:

- Understanding the learning process helps teachers make useful comments.
- Planning should integrate assessment from the outset, not leave it until the end.
- Assessment should differentiate between process and outcome – a project might fail to affect the desired change, but function effectively as a learning experience.
- Reflecting on the active experience helps ensure the learning is acknowledged.

### Triangulating evidence

Peer and self assessment have a place in all Citizenship education, but they are especially important in community participation. As a teacher you may still want to make an overall judgement about achievement, but in coming to your view, you will be helped if you ‘triangulate’ several sources of information – from pupils, and other people affected by the project.

### Unpicking the process

Much of the work undertaken in the community (whether it is based in or outside of the school building) will involve pupils in group activity (practising skills 3a and b). To some extent you can observe groups working together, and collect evidence as you do, for example:

	Lesson 1 Teacher Observations
Student 1	<i>Assumed leadership role...</i>
Student 2	<i>Marginalised by group, I intervened</i>

This will help you keep track of how groups evolve over time, but will not enable you to identify all the important negotiations and learning points within each group. In order to really unpick the process of group work you will need to integrate the pupils’ own evaluations of their role and of others in the group.

To enable pupils to undertake meaningful reflection and evaluation of their groupwork, the teacher should consider ways in which pupils can be made aware of the learning process as well as criteria for judging the outcomes. This may involve teaching about how groups work, or structuring evaluation activities that enable pupils to reflect on key dimensions of their experience.

**A weak example of self assessment:**

Teacher gives class 5 minutes at the end of the project to complete three sentences:

One thing I did well was...

One thing I would change is...

Overall I think...

**A better example of self assessment:**

Teacher provides illustrations of productive behaviours for group members e.g.

I listened to others and kept an open mind

I tried to find a solution that helped people agree

I helped other people who were struggling...

Pupils are asked to keep track of when and how they meet any of these criteria at the end of each group work session. Pupils are then given time to review their progress at the end of the project with structured questions, including:

What did you find easy to do?

What did you have to try hard to achieve?

These simple structures help ensure pupils develop their skills of reflection (3c). When matched with peer evaluation of the group, these insights will help pupils and teachers get a clear understanding of what has happened, why it happened and what has been learned.

**Outcomes**

On one level judging the success of a project is easy - either something changed or it didn't. This may form part of the evaluation, but is often influenced by factors outside of pupils' control. Examining the reasons why is just as important.

Most participative projects will have an audience (simulations, presentations, campaigning) or a group of recipients (charity, members of the community, other children). These people will have a unique perspective on the project's outcomes. For example, a group may work well together to plan, fundraise and create a community mural on a nearby estate, but if the local residents hate it, this needs to be recognised, and fed into the evaluation process. In this case it would indicate an important error had been made at the planning stage. Planning ahead is important here as you will often only have one chance to get some structured feedback from recipients or audience members.

**Resources**

The *Get Global!* Project has developed free materials to help assess active citizenship:

[www.actionaid.org/schoolsandyoung](http://www.actionaid.org/schoolsandyoung)