

The Learning School Project

Sharing the Learning Intention

& Success Criteria

2016-2017

**Coláiste Chiaráin,
Croom,
Co. Limerick**



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School Context:

Coláiste Chiaráin is a large rural, multi-denominational DEIS school with over 800 students and 65 teachers. The school has grown significantly over a short space of time, from 250 students in 2002 to currently over 800. With this huge growth, the diversity of the school population has changed and as a result, so too has its needs. We have a student body of over 50 nationalities and 64 languages. Therefore, providing a learning environment that is aligned with our ethos, “*to encourage our students to stretch the boundaries of their individual ability*”, can prove challenging. We have students attending from small rural primary schools with 10 students in 6th class and students attending from large urban primary schools with 150 students in 6th class. These students will have experienced different learning environments, approaches and techniques, which, we as a Secondary school need to acknowledge, and develop strategies to help with the multi-faceted transition of our student body from Primary to Secondary level.

A learning school is defined as a community of practice which respects and values learning by all and where the culture is one of continuing reflection and inquiry, commitment to the process of review and self-evaluation in its ongoing development. It is due to the commitment to this vision that Coláiste Chiaráin has enthusiastically engaged in the Learning School project 8.

Rationale:

As a school we have actively engaged in School Self Evaluation for the past number of years. Through this process and following an MLL/WSE in our school last year, we have recognised the importance of effective teaching and learning strategies. An area which we as a staff identified as a possible area we could improve on, is the sharing of learning intentions and success criteria. Despite building learning intentions into our planning documents, we are not always good at sharing learning intentions and success criteria with our students. At the same time, we want our students to be self - motivated and have a sense of purpose. This poses difficulties for students without the establishment of clear goals. Research shows that students who regularly receive this information in the classroom are more focused for longer periods of time, more motivated and active in their learning and better able to take responsibility for their own learning. (NCCA, Focus on Learning –Learning Intentions & Success Criteria). In order to ensure effective implementation, we must broaden our understanding of AfL. By reading the works of the many leading educational researchers, in particular the work of Paul Black, Dylan Wiliam and Craig Mertler, we must learn from their accounts of good practice and the most appropriate model of research.

The goals of our research project were twofold; to introduce the notion of deliberately sharing the learning intention at the beginning of every lesson / area of study and to gradually introduce the idea of success criteria to our students. We chose four groups of 2nd Year students along with one group of 1st Year students, based on the teaching groups of the the teachers involved, to pilot this project. Five teachers, each from a different subject background took on this initial phase of the project, with the intention of rolling it out to all staff members in September 2017, if proven to be beneficial to the student learning experience. It was decided to

conduct this study across a broad range of subjects to ensure that we captured experiences from across the curriculum spectrum.

We believe every child has a right to a quality and consistent education. Through formal and informal discussion with colleagues and pupils, we have noticed many different types of teaching approaches. As a research group, we feel that if we were consistent in how we structure our lessons; students' experience, engagement and participation would increase, thus improving the quality of teaching and learning. "...Research evidence has indicated improvements in the order of 12% in test scores for students coming from AfL classrooms". (NCCA, Assessment for Learning Leaflet).

Our approach recognises that the teacher, the peer and the learner all have critical roles in the AfL process. This study focussed on sharing learning intentions and identifying success criteria from the perspective of the teacher and learner. It is envisaged that this study will inform practice within the school by establishing where students are in their learning, identifying their learning destination and carefully planning the route to success.

Pre-Planning Actions:

In order to achieve our aims, we carried out the following:

Management:

We met with the Principal and Deputy Principal to discuss our ideas for the project. It was important to our research team that management were supportive and very aware of our project aims.

Project Team:

The research team was comprised of five members in total. Three of the project research team attended the hub sessions in Limerick Education Centre in November, December, March, April and May and brought the information back to the rest of the team and to management. Members of the LSP 8 support team (Carmel O'Doherty & Grainne Dennison) also visited the school and met with the research team in February to engage in a discussion on how we planned on running our project and where we felt we might need advice. Finally the research team took responsibility for collecting and analysing survey results, attending group discussions after school to further enhance how the project ran and for drawing up the final report.

Teachers

Initially, the research team presented the project aims to all staff on February 2nd during a staff meeting. Throughout the project term, the research group provided brief updates at staff meetings on how the project was progressing and the project aims and outcomes were discussed informally in the staffroom. The project results were presented to all staff on May 18th. The overall effectiveness of the project was discussed and teachers were informed that this pilot project will now be rolled out to all 1st year classrooms next year.

Students

Students were made aware of the LSP 8 project through the subject teachers of the research team. An information sheet was given to parents and parental consent was sought for students to participate in the project.

Participants

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Number of students</u>
Teacher 1	Science	24
Teacher 2	Maths	18
Teacher 3	English	26
Teacher 4	German	17
Teacher 5	French	26

Resources:

- Meeting time after school to facilitate group reflection, planning and discussion of progress.
- LSP meetings in Limerick Education Centre
- Support network - support from management and LSP support team
- LSP google drive log
- WALT stickers for whiteboards
- Bloom's Taxonomy Posters

Method:

Research Approach

It is an important duty of the researcher to pay particular attention to validity and reliability when conducting research and analysing findings so that every effort is made to minimise errors and to enhance the trustworthiness of findings. Cohen et al (2007) state that, threats to validity and reliability can never be erased completely but that they can be reduced by giving them due consideration throughout the research. Cohen and Manion (2000) explain that “exclusive reliance on one method may bias or distort the researcher’s picture of the particular slice of reality they are investigating”. Therefore a mixed method approach was employed as Cohen and Manion (2000) define triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection that can be used to gain greater assurance of validity if the data is replicated in both the quantitative and qualitative research. The research group used survey analysis for both staff and students, teacher feedback through a qualitative log, and student feedback through post-its which gave a rich variety to the result collection methods.

Quantitative data collection:

- Student pre-implementation survey
- Teacher pre-implementation survey
- Student post-implementation surveys

Qualitative data collection

- LAOS grid teacher analysis
- Student post - its
- Research group log

Design and Implementation

Phase 1

According to Assessment for Learning guidelines, the learning intention for a lesson or series of lessons is a statement which describes clearly what the teacher wants the students to know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the learning and teaching activities. The teacher knows why the students are engaged in a particular activity, but the students are not always able to differentiate between the activity and the learning that it is meant to promote. A carefully framed learning intention will direct students' attention to the learning. The learning intention emphasises what the students will *learn*, rather than what they will *do*. Having discussed and analysed various theories on the sharing of learning intentions, the research group looked at the most appropriate ways of collecting the necessary data for this trial.

The data collection methods included the presentation of an adapted version of the “Looking at our Schools Framework” grid (Appendix 1), which was used to extract baseline data from our teachers. The adapted LAOS grid highlighted the area of sharing learning intentions as an area of challenge for our school.

From here, the research group conducted a staff survey, specifically related to the way in which they let the learners know what they will be learning in class (see Appendix 2). We then conducted a pre implementation survey with the students on how they felt teachers share what they want the students to learn in class (see Appendix 3). This was followed up by an explanation by each member of the research group to their class on what a learning intention is and a discussion with the students around why these may be beneficial to learning in the classroom. The students were then handed a post-it, on which they could write what they felt had

been the learning intention of this lesson, what they had learnt in the class and any other thoughts that they may have on learning intentions.

For the following 6 weeks, the research group trialled the sharing of the learning intention at the beginning of each lesson or area of study. It was explicitly written on the board under the banner of WALT... “We are learning to...” The research group had identified the need to use appropriate terminology when writing the learning intentions. Having chosen to use the verbs of Bloom’s Taxonomy, we were conscious of the fact that we have mixed ability classes and that the hierarchical approach of Bloom’s would not always be suitable in our school context. We adapted the original Bloom’s pyramid to a Bloom’s grid (Appendix 4) that we felt was more suitable to our student body. We felt it was important to use the Bloom’s verbs as these are key terms in the new Junior Cycle Framework. At the end of this research phase, the students were once again surveyed on their attitudes / thoughts on the sharing of learning intentions (Appendix 5). Students also completed post-its on how effective they felt the experience had been. The research group kept a log on how they felt the process was going for them and how they felt about the teaching and learning that had taken place in their classrooms during this 6 week trial.

Phase 2

The research group had identified quite early in this process the need to share the success criteria with our students and the very obvious connections between the learning intentions and the success criteria. The learning intention of a lesson or series of lessons tells students what they should know, understand and be able to do, and the success criteria help teachers to decide whether their students have in fact achieved the learning intention. Importantly, the success criteria also answer the same question from the point of view of the student: *How will I know whether I've achieved the learning intention?* The positive use of the term success criteria focuses on students' ability to succeed rather than focussing on what the student doesn't know.

By referring to the success criteria, students should be able to evaluate their progress while in the process of completing an assessment task or activity, and then evaluate their achievement on completion. Peers should also be able to provide feedback to other students at strategic points while they are in the process of completing the assessment task or activity. Finally the teacher is able to provide feedback which students can act on to improve their performance.

The research group initially explained the notion of success criteria to their students. Over the following 6 week cycle success criteria were established during the course of a lesson / area of study, sometimes by the teacher and sometimes by the students. The students very quickly recognised the success criteria as a sort of checklist that they could refer back to during the course of their learning. Teachers used it as a recap at the end of their lessons, focussing on where the learning was at and where it still needed to go. Teachers encouraged the students to evaluate each other's work using only the success criteria to assess the work.

At the end of this 6 week cycle, students were once again surveyed using survey monkey to establish the students' views on the effectiveness of establishing / setting success criteria and its impact on their learning (Appendix 6).

Findings:

Teacher Pre-Implementation LAOS grid

<u>Domain 1</u>	<u>Please Indicate Strength (S) or Challenge (C) in our school</u>
<u>Students enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn and expect to achieve as learners</u>	<u>33% Strength</u> <u>45% Challenge</u> <u>22% Both</u>
<u>Students have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required to understand themselves and their relationships</u>	<u>11% Strength</u> <u>78% Challenge</u> <u>11% Both</u>
<u>Students demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the post-primary curriculum</u>	<u>0% Strength</u> <u>78% Challenge</u> <u>22% Both</u>
<u>Students attain the stated learning outcomes for each subject, course and programme</u>	<u>33% Strength</u> <u>56% Challenge</u> <u>11% Both</u>

<u>Domain 2</u>	<u>Please Indicate Strength (S) or Challenge (C) in our school</u>
<u>Students engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities</u>	<u>78% Strength</u> <u>22% Challenge</u> <u>0% Both</u>
<u>Students Grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive</u>	<u>89% Strength</u> <u>11% Challenge</u> <u>0% Both</u>
<u>Students reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning,</u>	<u>11% Strength</u> <u>78% Challenge</u> <u>11% Both</u>
<u>Students Experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning</u>	<u>78% Strength</u> <u>22% Challenge</u> <u>0% Both</u>

<p><u>Domain 3</u></p>	<p><u>Please Indicate Strength (S) or Challenge (C) in our school</u></p>
<p><u>The Teacher has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills.</u></p>	<p><u>100% Strength</u> <u>0% Challenge</u> <u>0% Both</u></p>
<p><u>The teachers selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress students' learning</u></p>	<p><u>100% Strength</u> <u>0% Challenge</u> <u>0% Both</u></p>
<p><u>The teacher selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the Learning Intentions and to students' learning needs</u></p>	<p><u>56% Strength</u> <u>33% Challenge</u> <u>11% Both</u></p>
<p><u>The teacher responds to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary</u></p>	<p><u>45% Strength</u> <u>44% Challenge</u> <u>11% Both</u></p>

<u>Domain 4</u>	<u>Please Indicate Strength (S) or Challenge (C) in our school</u>
<u>Teachers value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration</u>	<u>78% Strength</u> <u>22% Challenge</u> <u>0% Both</u>
<u>Teachers work together to devise learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum</u>	<u>89% Strength</u> <u>11% Challenge</u> <u>0% Both</u>
<u>Teachers collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices</u>	<u>78 % Strength</u> <u>22% Challenge</u> <u>0% Both</u>
<u>Teachers contribute to building whole- staff capacity by sharing their expertise</u>	<u>78% Strength</u> <u>22% Challenge</u> <u>0% Both</u>

The results from the LAOS grid survey of staff highlighted two key areas of challenge for our school. These were:

“Students reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning” - Domain 2 Learner Experiences

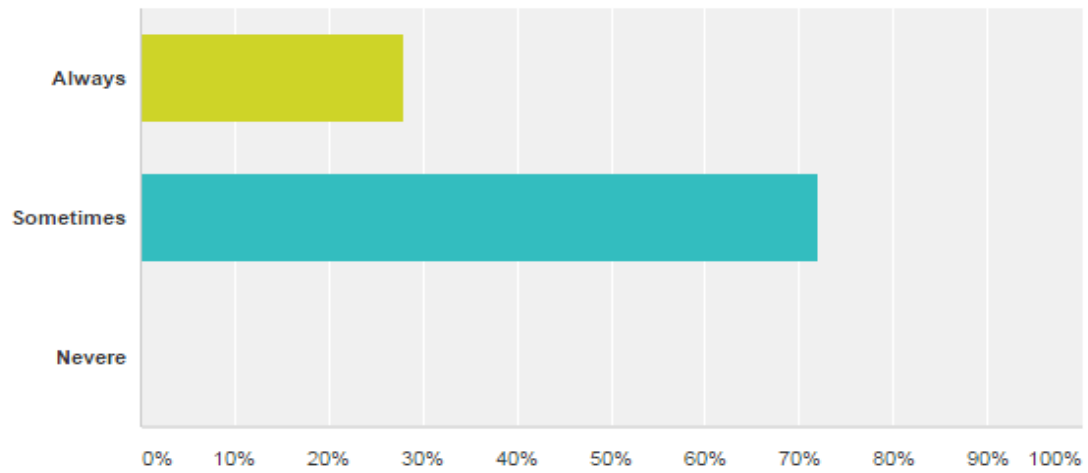
“The teacher selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the Learning Intentions and to students’ learning needs” - Domain 3 Teachers’ Individual Practices

These areas formed the basis for our rationale and focused our project aims.

Teacher Pre-Implementation Survey (Learning Intentions)

I set Learning Intentions with my students

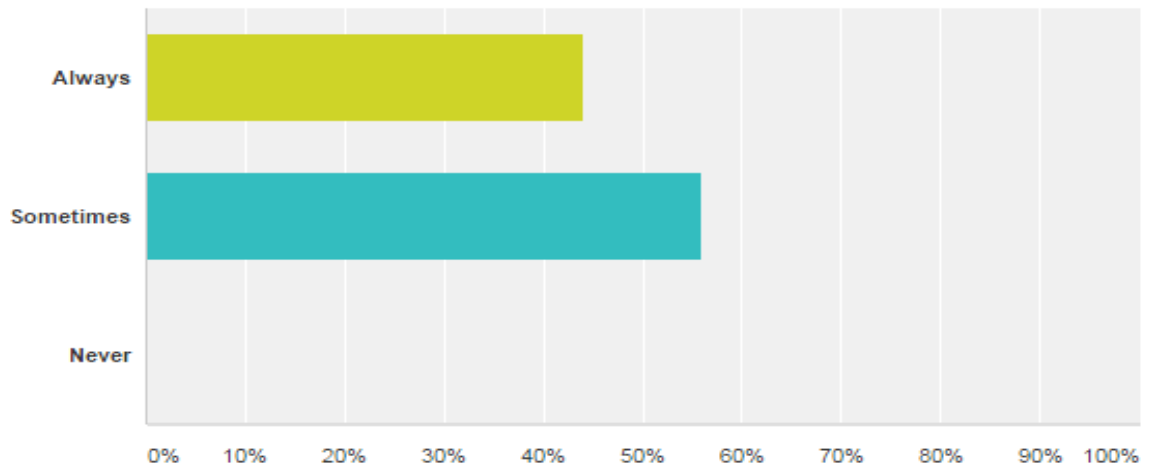
Answered: 50 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Always	28.00%	14
Sometimes	72.00%	36
Neveer	0.00%	0

I use words associated with Learning

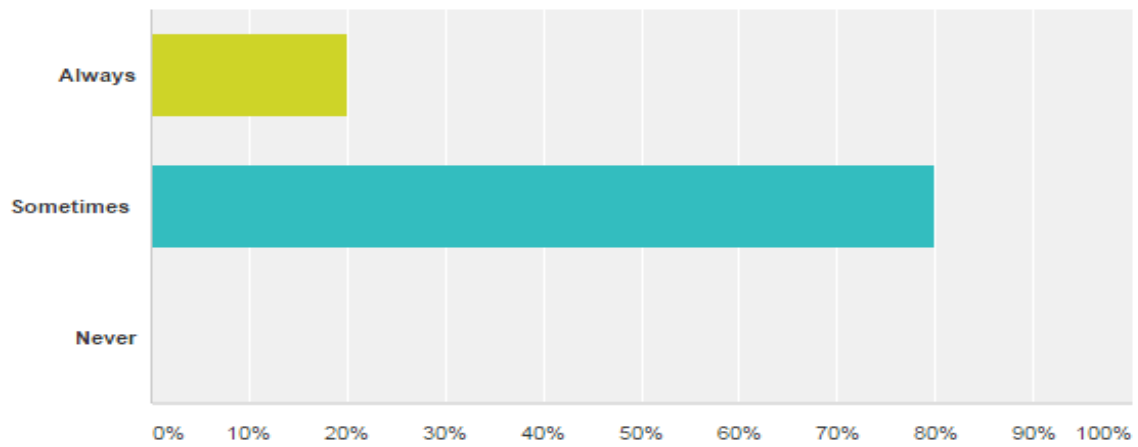
Answered: 50 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Always	44.00%	22
Sometimes	56.00%	28
Never	0.00%	0
Total		50

I re-visit Learning Intentions during and at the end of the lesson

Answered: 50 Skipped: 0

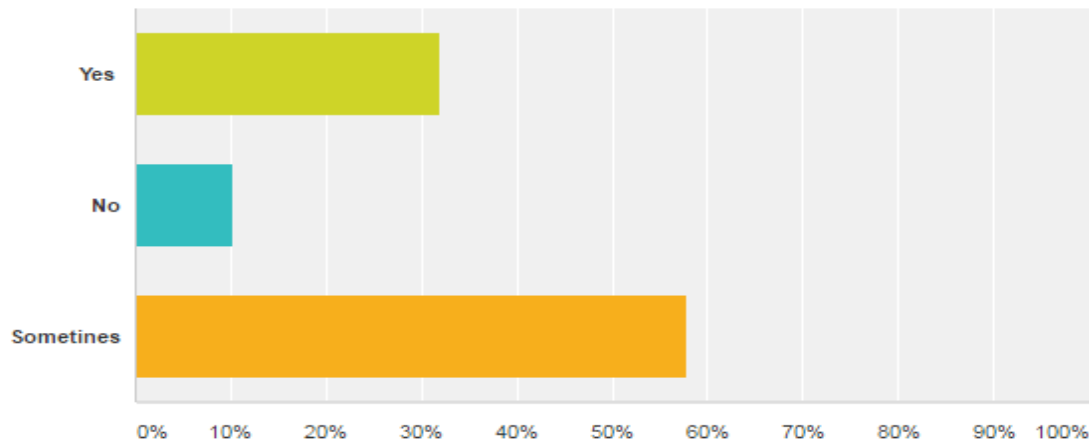


Answer Choices	Responses	
Always	20.00%	10
Sometimes	80.00%	40
Never	0.00%	0
Total		50

Student Pre-Implementation Survey (Learning Intentions)

At the beginning of class, do your teachers tell you what you will learn in their lesson?

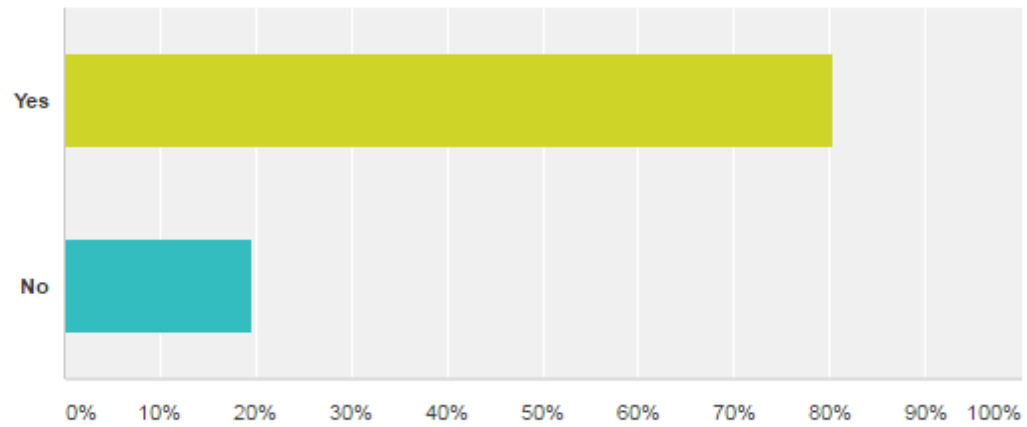
Answered: 97 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	31.96%	31
No	10.31%	10
Sometimes	57.73%	56
Total		97

Do you think this helps/would help you to focus on what you need to learn?

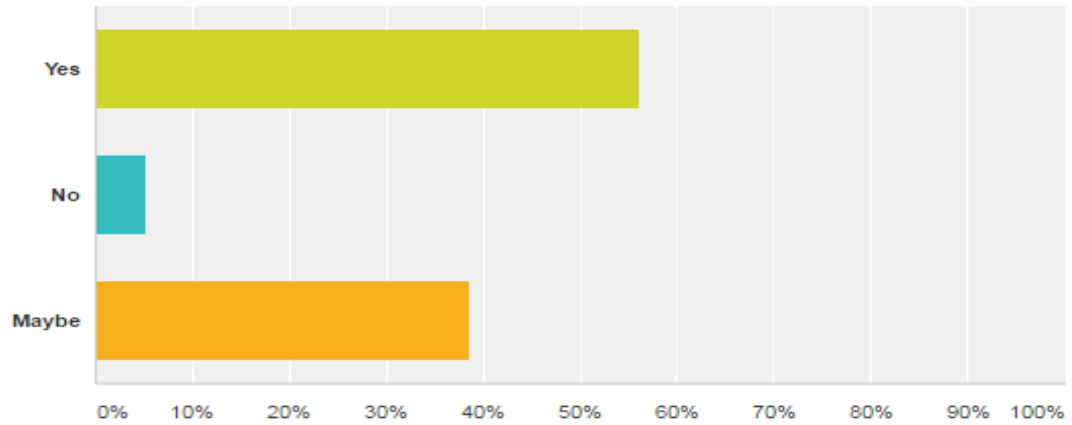
Answered: 97 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	80.41%	78
No	19.59%	19
Total		97

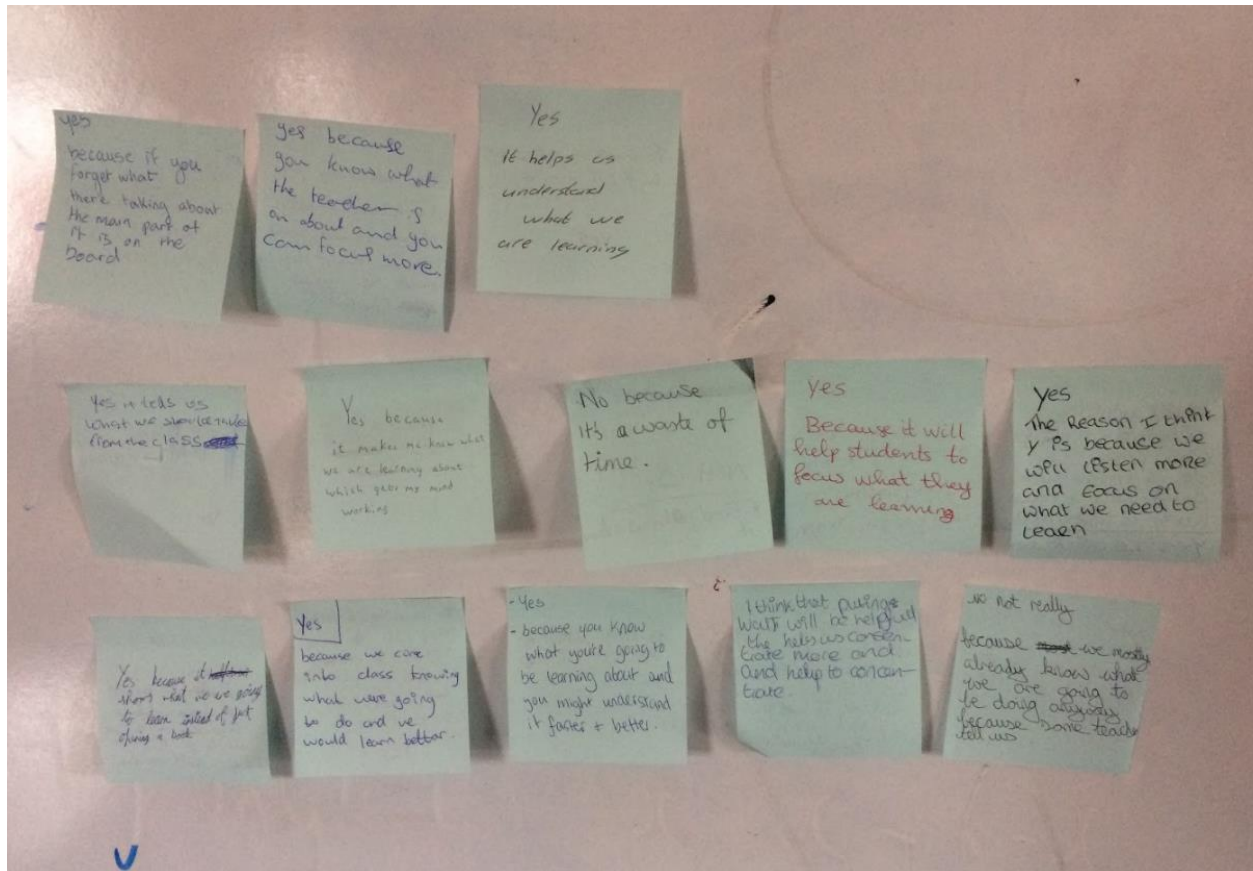
Do you think you would learn more if your teacher told you "what we are learning today is...."

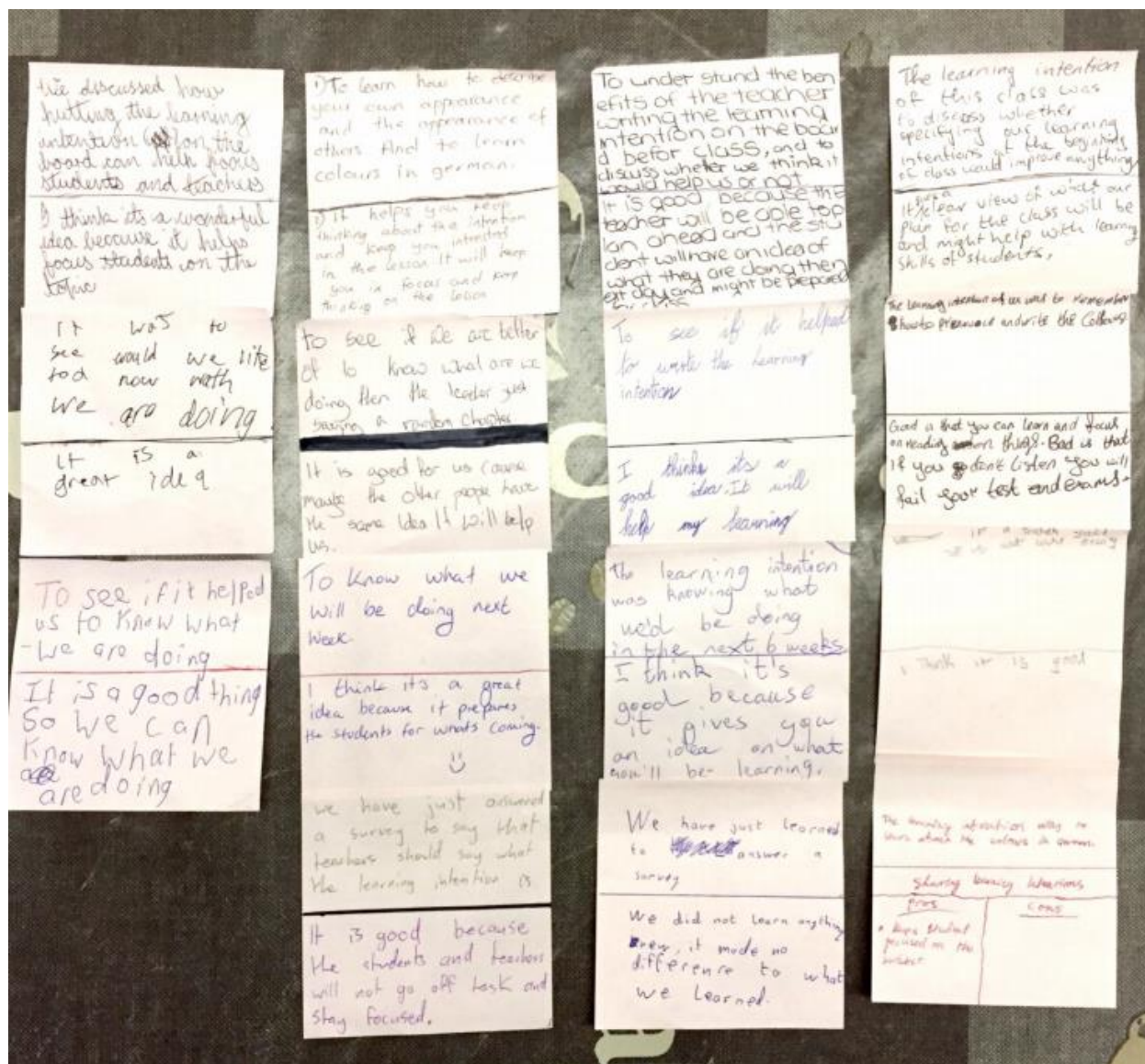
Answered: 96 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	56.25%	54
No	5.21%	5
Maybe	38.54%	37
Total		96

Student Pre-Implementation Feedback (Learning Intentions)



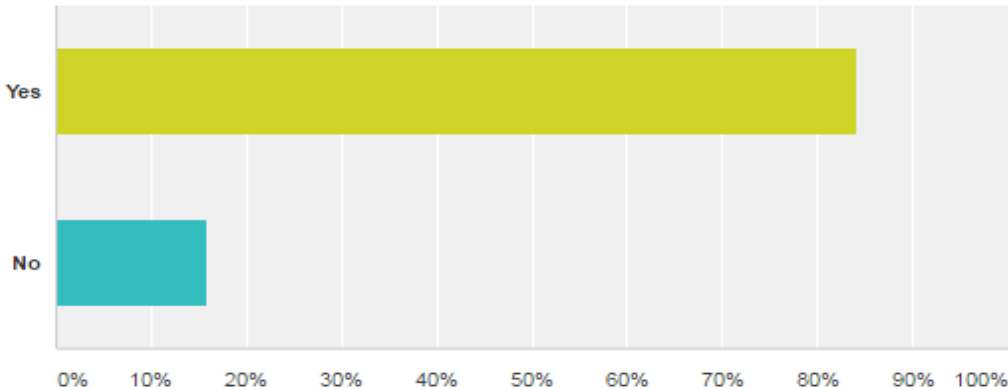


It is clear from the data above that teachers were not always sharing the learning intention with their students (approx 70%). 80% of students felt that the sharing of learning intentions would help them focus on what they need to learn. This further highlighted the need to explore the area of sharing learning intentions in this project.

Student Post-Implementation Survey (Learning Intentions)

Do you think that the sharing of the learning intention (W.A.L.T.) by your teacher was helpful over the last few weeks

Answered: 88 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	84.09%	74
No	15.91%	14
Total		88

Student Post-Implementation Feedback (Learning Intentions)

It is quite clear from the graph above that the sharing of learning intentions had a extremely positive effect on students' learning experiences. Some of the students' experiences are highlighted below:

Student1

- Because you know what you're going to learn and then it's easy to know at the end whether you know what you were supposed to and if not what to go back over and learn

Student 2

- It's more obvious what we are doing and you can focus more

Student 3

- This is because we have a clear goal on what we are learning

Student 4

- helped me understand what the aim was

Student 5

- it's very helpful to know what is expected in class and what you are going to learn

Student 6

- I think it a great idea because we know what we are going to learn at the start of class, and at the end of class we can check whether we have learned what was shared at the start of class

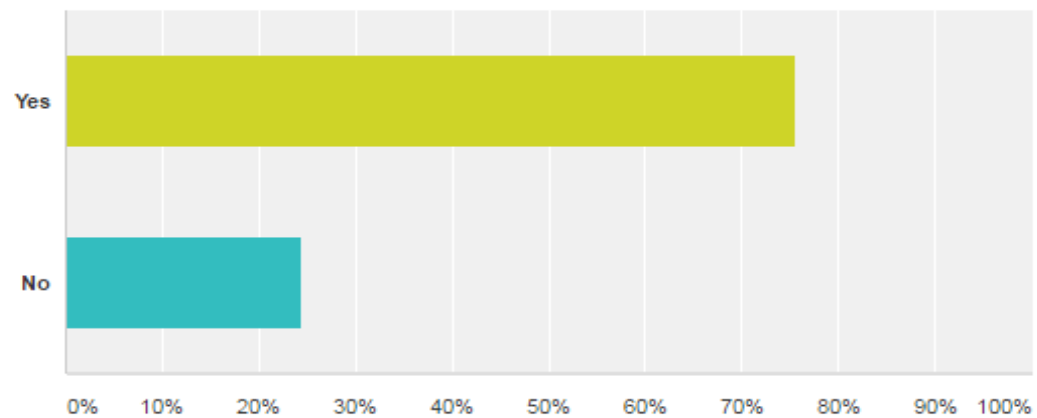
The students' positive learning experiences can be summed up by the keywords used in the post implementation survey feedback:

Focuses my Learning, Helps me Understand, I know what I will be Learning, Helps to Recap

Student Post-Implementation Survey (Success Criteria)

Did the success criteria (BAT) help you to achieve your learning intention?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 0

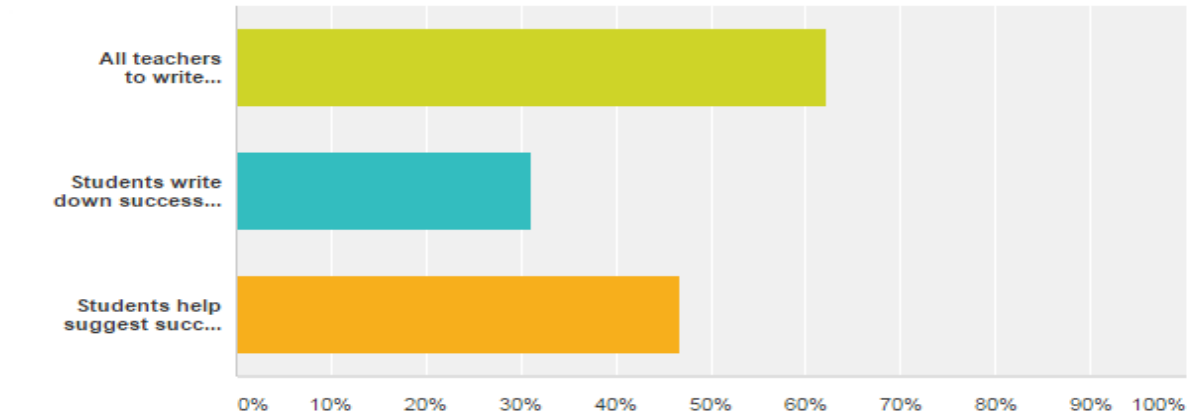


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	75.51%	37
No	24.49%	12
Total	49	

As can be seen from the graph above, the use of success criteria had an extremely positive effect on student learning, (75.5% Yes).

In your opinion, what could your teachers do to make success criteria easier for you to use?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 4



Answer Choices	Responses
<div>▼</div> All teachers to write success criteria (BAT) on the board and revisit it at the end of the topic	62.22% 28
<div>▼</div> Students write down success criteria (BAT) in their copies	31.11% 14
<div>▼</div> Students help suggest success criteria (brainstorm)	46.67% 21

Based on analysis of our graph it is clear that students felt that a combination of two or more methods of sharing success criteria would make it easier for their learning.

Outcomes - What was the learning?

What was the learning for the research team?

Below are entries to our teacher reflection diary which indicate some of the learning for the teachers

"Teacher 1 has found that incorporating learning intentions into lessons assists in focusing the students from the outset of the lesson. I feel it provides students with an active sense of participation and has a positive effect on the overall behaviour of the students. Explicitly referring back to the Intentions in the closing minutes of the class adds a sense of completion also. I find that as we have progressed with a specific focus on learning intentions, the number of students participating orally has improved also, specifically when we do the reflective stage on what has been learned".

"Teacher 2 feels that the lessons must be planned in advance in order to fully incorporate the potential of WALT to its maximum. She also finds it beneficial, for the pupils, when they are revising for a test, as they know what grammar points, vocab and verbs they are expected to know in relation to the topic covered".

What the learning for the students?

Students were more aware of their role as self-directed learners in the learning process. Students became more focused in their learning and were clear on the direction of their learning. They knew what they had to learn and the steps required to get there. In particular they were aware of any gaps in their learning that needed to be bridged.

What was the learning for the school?

Following on from our research we have clearly established the need to bring this project to a whole school setting. The project team have discussed their findings with senior management and management are in agreement that this project is worth rolling out to all staff of first year in the next academic year. After dissemination of findings to staff, the project showed that leadership can and should be distributed and nurtured within the entire organisation. When teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles there is an increased sense of motivation. If we as a school want to encourage this community of practice through the use of AfL strategies, then subject departments must encourage and adopt the use of these strategies across their subject area. It must take a position on the agenda at subject meetings and become part of professional collaborative discussion both within and between subject departments.

Reflections:

- Sharing of the learning intention and success criteria was hugely successful for the student learning experience and the teacher's individual classroom practice.
- An increase in professional dialogue in the staffroom was created surrounding the effectiveness of AfL on student learning
- Research group felt that stating the learning intentions is helpful for pupils to reflect on their own learning.
- Timing of the implementation of phase 2 of the project was an issue due to pre-planned student activities at that time of year

Recommendations:

- Roll out to all teachers of first year in the next academic year
- Provide CPD for all staff before roll out
- Ensure that all students experience the same lesson structure; beginning with the sharing of learning intention followed by the establishment of success criteria and ending with a reflection on where their learning is at.

Conclusion

The Learning School Project 8 provided Coláiste Chiaráin with an invaluable opportunity to actively engage in AfL strategies and develop both our pedagogical practices as teachers and the learning outcomes of our students. The project empowered us as teachers to deepen the thinking and learning experiences that occur in our classroom and enables our students to take ownership of their learning. The action research element of the project allows teachers to critically examine their individual classroom practice. This lead to a re-evaluation of lesson planning with more emphasis on reflection of both the teaching and learning in the classroom. We look forward to deepening our understanding of these strategies and embedding them further in the whole school context in the future.

Appendices:

1. Adapted LAOS grid

Domain 1	Please Indicate Strength (S) or Challenge (C) in our school
Students enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn and expect to achieve as learners	
Students have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes required to understand themselves and their relationships	
Students demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the post-primary curriculum	
Students attain the stated learning outcomes for each subject, course and programme	

Domain 2	Please Indicate Strength (S) or Challenge (C) in our school
Students engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities	
Students Grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive	
Students reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning,	
Students Experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning	

Domain 3	Please Indicate Strength (S) or Challenge (C) in our school
<p>The Teacher has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills.</p>	
<p>The teachers selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress students' learning</p>	
<p>The teacher selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the Learning Intentions and to students' learning needs</p>	
<p>The teacher responds to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary</p>	

Domain 4	Please Indicate Strength (S) or Challenge (C) in our school
Teachers value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration	
Teachers work together to devise learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum	
Teachers collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices	
Teachers contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise	

2. Staff Pre-Implementation Survey

1. I set Learning Intentions with my students

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

2. I make sure that the Learning Intentions are in student friendly language

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☒ Never

3. I use words associated with Learning

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

4. I make sure the Learning Intention is clear and links to the big picture. i.e. the purpose of the learning

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

5. I use SMART Learning Intentions - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-limited

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

6. I re-visit Learning Intentions during and at the end of the lesson

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

3. Student Pre-Implementation Survey

Leading Learning - Student Survey

Answer all Questions

1. At the beginning of class, do your teachers tell you what you will learn in their lesson?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

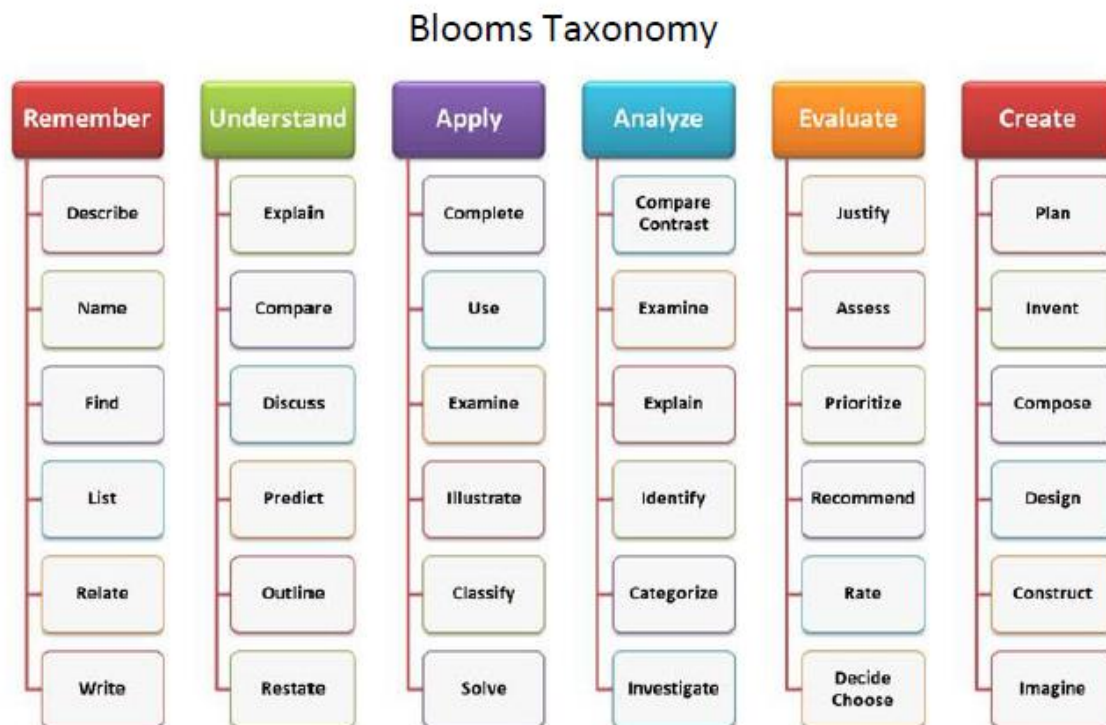
2. Do you think this helps/would help you to focus on what you need to learn?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. Do you think you would learn more if your teacher told you "what we are learning today is...."

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

4. Bloom's Taxonomy Grid Poster



5. Student Feedback Survey - Learning Intentions

WALT Feedback

1. Do you think that the sharing of the learning intention (W.A.L.T.) by your teacher was helpful over the last few weeks

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. In response to question 1, please explain why

6. Student Feedback Survey - Success Criteria

Success Criteria - Student survey

Answer all Questions

1. Do you understand the meaning of success criteria?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

2. If no, why not?

3. Did the success criteria (BAT) help you to achieve your learning intention?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

4. If no, why not?

5. In your opinion, what could your teachers do to make success criteria easier for you to use?

- ☐ All teachers to write success criteria (BAT) on the board and revisit it at the end of the topic
☐ Students write down success criteria (BAT) in their copies
☐ Students help suggest success criteria (brainstorm)
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References

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