

Assessment in RE - The Woodbridge Way

What does it mean to be(focus on world religion) in 2008?

Year 7

Purpose

One of the main areas of the school development plan is to look at key stage three assessment. With this in mind and in light of the potential of the newsecondary curriculum and QCA's 'Big Picture of the Curriculum' for RE, I decided to devise a new set of assessments tasks which have a strong focus on a range of assessment for learning strategies.

Main 'Learning Outside the Classroom' Focus

With each of the assessments I decided to utilise student voice and conduct a market research session with a number of different learners asking them how the different assessments tasks have help to develop their learning and also whether these assessments tasks made their learning more enjoyable and exciting.

Main assessment focus

For this assessment, the focus is to develop students' knowledge and understanding of the following key concepts:

- 1.1 Beliefs, teachings and sources
- 1.2 Practices and ways of life
- 1.3 Expressing meaning

When developing these assessments I am going to use 'I Can' statements and break them down into manageable chunks which will help pupils achieve. I am also going to replace the levels with statements. These are:

- Level 3 replaced by All students must
- Level 4 replaced by All students could
- Level 5 replaced by All students Should
- Level 6 replaced by Those who have progressed even further

School profile

Woodbridge High School, London Borough of Redbridge
Cory Cambridge: supported by Claire Clinton

Total number of learners	1500
Age range	11-18
Specialist status	Languages, Business & Enterprise, Vocational
Level 5 and above in key stage 3 tests (2007)	79%
Five A*-C at GCSE (2007)	64%
Special educational needs	2.5%

Woodbridge High is a heavily oversubscribed 11-18 co-educational, multi-cultural, comprehensive school situated in the north of the London Borough of Redbridge. In Key Stage three students follow the Redbridge local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education which has a particular emphasis upon Philosophy and Ethics. To ensure continuity and progression from this syllabus, Philosophy and Ethics continue to be a focus at key stages four and five.

Question 1: What are we trying to achieve?

The aim of this project was for the department to assess less in order to assess better. Once I began the project I conducted an evaluation of the ways in which the department currently uses assessment for learning and where we would like to be. Using the assessment for learning evaluation tool we made the following judgement:

Current position:	Desired position:
Pupils are beginning to assess their own work and that of their peers against the learning objectives and learning outcomes	Pupils can use success criteria to improve their own work and that of their peers and can recognise that standards they are aiming for in the subject
They are gaining in confidence in paired and group discussion and are beginning to provide constructive feedback	Pupils are increasingly confident in assessing their own working and provide informative and constructive feedback to others

What were our learners like at the start?

At the start of this project the learners were generally not very motivated by assessments (they are usually greeted by a huge sigh!) Learners have an awareness of peer assessment but most do not feel confident and need to develop their skills in how to give

constructive feedback. There are also a number of learners who continually do not achieve above a level three, partly because they are not motivated by the assessments.

What differences did we want to see in our learners?

One of the main aims of the new secondary curriculum is for learners to enjoy and achieve. Using this system of assessment, I wanted lower ability learners to feel that they could achieve whilst providing high ability pupils with additional challenge by adding a new level dedicated to: 'Those who have progressed even further'.

By breaking the assessment task down into manageable chunks I would also like learners to be able to utilise assessment for learning strategies. I would like them to develop the skills of self-reflection and self development through using the success criteria to aid their learning. I would also like learners to be able to provide one another with positive and constructive feedback whilst at the same time developing a sense of confidence in their own learning. I would also like pupils to embrace strands of the new curriculum by making assessments task link to learning in other subjects.

Question 2: How will we organise learning to achieve our aims?

How did we set about making a change?

The key question for the curriculum development is how are we going to make learners enjoy and achieve in RE?

The first change that was made was to review the scheme of work and identify areas which learners find particularly interesting. The reason for this was that if learners find a topic interesting they are more likely to achieve. Initially there is a focus on the three strands of attainment target one; learning about religion. From completing this assessment I am expecting an increase in the number of level six learners and also I am expecting that lower ability learners will be motivated and an increase amount of learners moving from level three to level four.

In relation to the assessment strand, 'Beliefs, Teachings and Sources' - I decided to use the unit on Holy Books and focus on the miracles of Jesus. This assessment required learners to create a newspaper article about two different miracles. Learners would then use the success criteria identified in the assessment task to peer assess their work. Learners were also encouraged to use ICT for this assessment so as to make the link between their RE and ICT.

In relation to the assessment strand, 'Practices and Ways of Life' - I decided to collaborate with the drama department and look at the life of the historical Buddha. For this

assessment pupils would have to produce a piece of creative writing using the teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path. Learners will then use this story in their work in drama.

In relation to the assessment strand, 'Forms of Expressing Meaning' - Learners would look at what it means to be a Muslim in 2008. This assessment required learners to write a news report which attempted to answer this question. This question also provided links to students' learning in Citizenship.

Question 3: How well have we achieved our aims?

What differences are evident? What impact have we made on our learners?

A number of improvements were made following this project. There was a shift in the department's approach to assessments. Now the department is able to spend much more class time on peer assessment and also spend time developing skills such as reflection and ways in which to provide constructive feedback. I have made changes to the scheme of work so there is now a dedicated time for pupils to carry out peer assessments. I have also developed some new assessment material which I have been able to share with the Redbridge RE leadership incentive grant group. Finally I have also been able to utilise cross-curricular dimensions in a meaningful way.

There are a number of differences in Religious Education at Woodbridge that are evident from this project. Learners feel much more motivated by this new style of assessment. When asked if they feel whether these assessments have helped them to enjoy and achieve, a respondent told me "Now I know exactly what I have to do to get a level 5." (Male pupil aged 12). Another pupil that I asked, who is low ability, also said 'This is really good sir, because I think I could get onto a level 4. This ain't boring so I will work harder for you' (female pupil aged 11). Finally I asked a very high ability pupil about reaching level 6 and she replied, 'I think I can I have just gotta work hard. I didn't know you could get a level 6. I am really motivated to do it now' (Female 12)

This project has made an impact on the learners because they now feel confident to provide one another with constructive feedback, reflect upon their learning and also they are able to breakdown the assessment criteria due to the time now dedicated in the lessons to this to taking place.

These assessments have been widely well received by the RE leadership incentive grant group, some of whom have asked for access to these materials. I have also received some positive feedback from my Headteacher who, during a lesson observation, saw me using this assessment system on an adapted year 9 assessment.

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I feel that pupils are generally more motivated by the assessment tasks and they also feel more confident to take ownership of their learning.

What evidence did we produce?

1. Assessment guide Year 7 Buddhism
2. Assessment Guide Year 7 Holy Books
3. Assessment guide Year 7 Islam