‘Secondary AfL – geography’ transcript

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ROMANY HUGHES: OK. Number 1. ‘I made money selling land for new housing.’ Danny?

DANNY: I got a shopkeeper or a restaurant owner.

ROMANY HUGHES: Yeah, either would do. ‘I have to travel 15 miles to school. At night, there's nothing to do.’ Caroline, what have you got?

CAROLINE: Teenager.

HEIDI BOYES: I'm going to ask you to stand up if you have given a positive comment about somebody's work.

ROMANY HUGHES: Can anybody at this table tell me what you think the mark scheme will be looking for in that question?

STUDENT 1: Causes and effects developed ideas?

ROMANY HUGHES: Excellent. Very good.

DANNY: Yeah, I don't think you'd have to sort of do a named road. Because that's not something I usually think about when –

ROMANY HUGHES: But with rivers, I talked to you about how you have to have specific data – for example, about the rainfall in January in Switzerland. Yeah? So, for a question on settlement, you're going to need to have similar sort of detail. And one of the ways you can get that in is actually talking about a specific road, isn't it?

DANNY: Yes.

[LAUGHTER]

Um, yeah, it is, I suppose. Sorry.

ROMANY HUGHES: Assessment for Learning has revolutionised the way that I teach. I used to be very didactic – very chalk-and-talk. And I think that's how I was trained to teach.

But since then, my teaching has changed. And I take a step back, and the students take much more responsibility for their own learning. And it does mean that it's a much more interactive environment within the classroom.

NARRATOR: The Geography department at Hendon School are leading the way on Assessment for Learning, embedding it into their scheme of work and training other departments in the school. AFL is used both as a motivational tool and to raise attainment at key stage 3 and 4.

ROMANY HUGHES: I did say that we're going to be talking about how to get an A-star answer, so that's what we're going to focus on next. You'll find that, on your desk, you've got an example of an answer that somebody's given to a rivers question. Could you have a look at that for me, please?

What I'd like you to do is to look at it and tell me whether you would have given it an A star. You've got the levelled mark scheme there. You're used to using these. You've got highlighter pens on your desk if you want them. Is that an A-star answer? OK? Be ready to tell me, in five minutes' time, whether it is.

STUDENT 2: Heavy rainfall. ‘Heavy rainfall meant that the ground was completely saturated [INAUDIBLE].’

STUDENT 3: I think it's level 3, then.

ROMANY HUGHES: The group is very motivated. They are year-10 students, and they're bright. They're likely to get Cs up to A stars at GCSE.

So tell me what you thought of this answer.

STUDENT 4: I think it's very good. The only thing I'd say is it's lacking some key words.

ROMANY HUGHES: Such as?

STUDENT 5: Where it says ‘water ran across the surface,’ they could have just said ‘surface runoff’ and used key words.

ROMANY HUGHES: Yeah, good. OK. And we know that key words are important, don't we, for a level-3 answer? OK? Excellent. Thanks, boys.

The reason why I modelled the answer initially on rivers was because I wanted students to see what an A-star answer looked like. And that's one of the things we have to do in Assessment for Learning – is actually show the students what we want them to produce as their end product. Because only by showing them what we want can the students actually identify what it is that they need to do in order to actually produce that piece of work.

Who can give me a couple of reasons why this is an A-star answer? What's so good about it?

STUDENT 6: Well, it's got the named-river example, which is the River Rhine fl – the River Rhine.

ROMANY HUGHES: Mhm?

STUDENT 6: It's got comprehensive and accurate, place-specific statements – for example, like, tell us about And have three developed statements describing different causes of flooding. For example, they receive 3.5 times its annual monthly rainfall.

ROMANY HUGHES: OK. And we've got several of those statements, within that text, haven't we? Which is excellent. OK? So this is the sort of detail that we're looking for for our A-star answers. And by the end of this lesson, I want you guys to have tried to have written an A-star answer, as well – not for this question, but for a settlement question about the village of Leire.

So this is from June 2006. All right? It's a question, and they're asking you about a named area within the UK – a named rural area – into which people have moved from urban areas. And they're asking you, what are the causes of this migration and the consequences for the rural area?

Now before I give you the mark scheme, I want you to just have a quick chat on your tables about what you think the mark scheme might actually be looking for. OK?

STUDENT 2: [INAUDIBLE].

STUDENT 7: Yeah, but each one, not just showing one particular one. You've got to show both the consequences and the causes of the migration.

ROMANY HUGHES: --ask the students to think about what the question was actually asking them. They were trying to predict what would be in the examiner's mark scheme. Obviously, that's a situation they'll be in in an exam, so I think it's important that they learn that skill and they really have to think about what it could be that the examiner will actually be looking for.

Can anybody in this table tell me what you think the mark scheme will be looking for in that question?

STUDENT 1: It'll be looking for causes and effects and, like, developed ideas?

ROMANY HUGHES: Good – all right. Now how do you think the examiner's going to mark it, when they actually look at your work?

STUDENT 7: There'll be one reserved for cause and one reserved for consequence.

ROMANY HUGHES: Right.

STUDENT 7: So there will be definitely those.

ROMANY HUGHES: OK. So your examiner's actually going to be specifically looking for those causes and consequences, and they will actually keep a mark back if you don't cover both of those things. Excellent. Very good. What else do you think you've got to have in there for a level 3?

STUDENT 8: You have to have the name of the rural area.

ROMANY HUGHES: Excellent. Yeah. Because the question is actually specifically saying ‘Name a rural area in the UK.’ All right? Good.

Right. The next thing that I want you guys to do is actually I'm going to give you the mark scheme, and I'm going to ask you to spend the next 15 minutes writing your own answer to this question. Obviously, you can use your notes, because it's not a test. All right?

I'm referring to that mark scheme, so make sure you keep looking at that. OK? Right – 15 minutes. Off you go.

Assessment for Learning initially is very difficult in any subject. And one of the most important things is actually trying to put everything into pupil speak. So the first thing we had to do was really think about, well, what do the level descriptors actually mean? We're engaging with a GCSE or an A-level mark scheme. Which, again – you have to actually put that into pupil speak so that the students know what it is that they have to do to achieve their target level.

HEIDI BOYES: All right. Today we're looking at, why is central Australia such a hostile environment?

NARRATOR: Across the corridor, Heidi Boyes's year-8 class are still getting to grips with Assessment for Learning.

HEIDI BOYES: Today, we're going to be understanding and looking at how your comments – how peer comments – and level descriptors help to write a good piece of working geography. OK? So that's our objective for today.

I've always tried to include Assessment for Learning in my lessons. I am very fortunate, in some ways, because I've only been teaching for four years now. So Assessment for Learning was introduced to me when I started at this school. But it has developed a lot, over the last couple of years.

NARRATOR: Working in pairs, students look at modelled answers on population distribution to give them practise with their peer-assessment skills.

STUDENT 9: I think the first one is level 6B, because they've added the temperature, and also they've, like – they've added a few keywords.

STUDENT 10: I think that the first paragraph should be levelled 6B, because it describes different factors in detail and tells you what central Australia is like.

STUDENT 11: But if you had the pictures and, like, diagrams and stuff, and then if they told you what the people – well, if there were people – what the conditions would be like –

HEIDI BOYES: The students – they have only done one year of peer- and self-assessment so far. And it is quite difficult for them to be able to write good, positive comments. You definitely need to give them some guidance. You need to give them an idea about what a good comment would be, what a bad comment would be, and make them understand, yes, the social side of the assessment, as well. So it's the feel-good factor that we want them to get.

So I want you to look at the comments you've just made. You've just written them down on your sheet. And I want you, first of all, to think, what makes them good or bad comments, and why? How would you feel about those comments being written about your work? OK? And what would you like it to say, instead?

STUDENT 12: If it was your work, what would you say? What would you think?

STUDENT 13: I'd be quite pleased with myself that I've done this much and people have thought of my work like this. And I wouldn't say – I wouldn't – but it does need a bit – it does need a bit more information and –

STUDENT 12: Tell you what you need to improve and what you don't need to improve.

STUDENT 13: Yeah.

HEIDI BOYES: If you got a negative comment – like, ‘You listed your ideas. You only described, you didn't explain’ – how did it make you feel? Karina.

STUDENT 14: I don't, like, deserve bad comment here, but at least I still deserve, like, some good comment that I did for my work?

HEIDI BOYES: You deserve to get some praise for it. OK, Nana, what do you think?

STUDENT 15: Would have been a bit upset, because I knew I could have done better on it. But then, when they give me the bad comments, I know what to do to improve my level next time on the assessment.

HEIDI BOYES: The peer- and self-assessment – it's much better for the pupils, because they're able to take owners for their own work – that they all like to read what each other have put. It's a good comparison. It's like a little competition, sometimes, between each other about how successful or – oh, I've put this in – you haven't put that in. Oh, I get better level, and this is because –

ROMANY HUGHES: OK, I've been round and had a look at your work. You're getting on really well. Many of you are using that mark scheme very effectively, indeed.

What I'm going to ask you guys to do now is actually to give each other some feedback by actually doing some peer assessment. So what I'm going to ask you to do is to swap your work on your tables, use that mark scheme, and decide what level you think the student is that at the moment. And then I'd like you to write them some targets about what they need to do, to make sure that they are improving that answer.

One of the biggest issues we still find is the issue of literacy. Our weaker students find Assessment for Learning very difficult. One of the solutions is possibly doing oral assessments in Geography. However, it's all very well assessing students orally at key stage 3, but when it comes to key stage 4 and key stage 5, obviously these students are going to be assessed in a written examination. So we do need to find a solution to this.

STUDENT 16: The target [INAUDIBLE] refer to the consequences, list more causes, and give more locational details.

STUDENT 17: OK. You did everything good. You gave lots of locational detail. You named the motorways and all your ideas were developed. And yeah, only thing is to give [INAUDIBLE], because you gave [INAUDIBLE], and you gave the consequence as well.

STUDENT 18: --because that's one of the things I felt you did well. You put a lot of causes. Even though you didn't do the consequences, you've done a lot of causes. But I think you need to develop them a bit more, saying why it's happening and where it's happening. That's it. I gave you 4 marks for it.

STUDENT 19: For the causes.

STUDENT 18: Yeah, for the causes. But you need to do the consequences, as well.

STUDENT 19: I gave you 6 marks, overall.

STUDENT 18: OK, great.

ROMANY HUGHES: In the long run, Assessment for Learning can save you an awful lot of time, particularly with marking, which is one of the most onerous tasks a teacher has. Slight problem with there is that I am concerned that there is this expectation that teachers do mark works. And I am conscious all the time of having this little person on my shoulder saying, where are your comments?

And that's one of the reasons why I use the verbal-feedback stamp, because I think it is important that parents are aware – inspectors, should they come in, are aware – that, yes, we are monitoring this.

So what you want to do then, obviously, to move yourself up, is do what?

STUDENT 4: Develop the answers further –

ROMANY HUGHES: Good.

STUDENT 4: --and explain them.

ROMANY HUGHES: Excellent. And you're beginning to get in some of your key detail here. And which level does that come from, on the mark scheme?

STUDENT 4: Level 2.

ROMANY HUGHES: Does it? You've got your specific statements, haven't you – M1, M6, M69?

STUDENT 4: Yeah. Oh, that's more level 3.

ROMANY HUGHES: That's more number 3, isn't it? OK?

STUDENT 4: But you can only get level 3 if you then talk about both –

ROMANY HUGHES: That's right. Exactly. OK? So you know what you need to do, now, to make it better, yeah? Good. Thanks.

There are more of those light-bulb moments within the classroom, and the students really do seem to get what it is that I want them to do, for the first time. And, for that reason, it is very rewarding. So it is a lovely way to teach.

HEIDI BOYES: There's one last thing I'd like you to do. I'm going to ask you to stand up if you've done the following. I'd like you to stand up if you think you've worked well with a partner today. Fantastic. That's everybody.

Assessment for Learning has definitely made geography teaching better. Not only that, it's made me a better teacher. Once it's there and in place, the students are familiar with Assessment for Learning, you come in, you say, right, we're going to do this today. We're peer-assessing – we're self-assessing. They're comfortable with it.

And I can see them developing. I can see them really getting to grips with geography – how to write a good piece of working geography. And that's exactly what we're about.

Third one – if you have given – and this is really important – positive comments about somebody's work. If you've given positive comments about somebody's work. Fantastic. How is that person going to feel about those positive comments? Tobi?

TOBEY: They'll feel really happy that they did well.

HEIDI BOYES: Excellent. Thank you. Well done.