



TESSA Share – Apréli@ Collection for School Leadership

Transforming teaching-learning process:
supporting teachers to raise performance



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Version E2400302 [Supportg_teachers_to_raise_performance-24.03.02]

School leadership collection

This TESSA Share – Apréli@ School Leadership OER (Open Educational Resource) is intended for school leaders, or any resource person in charge of pedagogical supervision within the structure (such as a director of study, director of schools, quality assurance officers, a head of department or a head of year/grade). Local pedagogical supervision can also use booklets from this collection with good effect. For the sake of convenience, we will group these people under the name "school leader".

By making the school the privileged locus for Professional Learning and Development (PLD), the collection aims to help school leaders to transform the school structure they are responsible for into an 'Extended Professional Learning Community' (ELPC) based on the continuous collaborative professional development of all actors.

The collection can be considered as a toolbox, consisting of several booklets in which school leaders can select the tools that are best suited to their reality and use them to meet the specific needs of their school community.

The different booklets are not to be exploited in a linear fashion: it would be more appropriate to select suitable elements to respond to a specific problem identified in and by the school. The booklets can also be used to set up training workshops, or to facilitate a thematic meeting with, for example, other local school leaders.

The booklets briefly present various concepts, focusing on practices, offering a wide range of case studies, activities, pauses for thought and resources, mainly OER.

In order to carry out the various activities on offer, school leaders are invited to keep a learning diary in order to help them to document, organize and capitalize in the long term their learning and their development. The collection thus contributes to the PLD of the school leaders themselves.

The broad objective of the collection is to facilitate the transformation of teaching-learning processes to enhance effective learning. It is about accompanying teachers so as to enable them to set up a model of horizontal learning where the learners are fully engaged in the construction of their learning. The school leader has a crucial role to play in facilitating this educational paradigm shift

This collection is the result of the adaptation, contextualization and enrichment of OERs produced by TESS-India for the leaders of Indian institutions (<http://www.tess-india.edu.in>). The examples presented in this collection have been gathered from different countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Notes :

As Internet links may become obsolete, we recommend that you download and save this booklet and the various additional resources it contains. The list of additional resources can be found in the appendix at the end of the document. You can also use a search engine to find a document whose Internet address has been changed.

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks, for their invaluable contribution to the realisation of this booklet, their infinite patience and their availability of every moment, to:

- Michèle Deane, teacher and teacher educator and teacher-educator educator
- Dele Yaya Former Director, Field Operations & Students Services/TESSA Coordinator, National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna, Nigeria
- We also thank all those who will tell us about their return and will contribute to the continuous improvement of our OER.

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Introduction

The booklet ***Supporting teachers to raise performance*** is a free educational resource (OER) developed by a group of teacher educators to support school leaders who accompany their staff's Professional Learning and Development (LPD) within their institution with a view of enhancing the conditions and quality of learning in the school.

It is an adaptation of the Apréli@ booklet ***Soutenir les enseignants pour améliorer les apprentissages*** which is available under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike licence: (http://www.aprelia.org/cahiers/c2/fichiers/C2_Soutenir_les_enseignants_pour_ameliorer_les_apprentis_sages.pdf) and /or <https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/page/view.php?id=218810>

It also draws on the work carried out by TESSA and Apréli@ in French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa, separately or jointly, as well as the resources resulting from this work.

It belongs to a collection of booklets that relates to the key issue of improving learning through school-based professional co-development. You may find it useful to refer to other booklets in the collection to develop your knowledge and skills as well as to the TESSA resources that are particularly pertinent to this key question. The collection includes:

- Leading the school development plan
- Leading teachers' continuous professional development
- Supporting teachers to raise performance
- Accompanying teachers: mentoring and coaching
- Leading the use of technology in your school
- Inclusive education toolkit
- Teaching practice supervisors' toolkit
- Working with Teachers: A Handbook for Teacher Educators

What this booklet is about

In an ideal world, all students would achieve good learning gains each year in school, helped by teachers who knew about the latest learning theories and how to apply these to individual student's needs. The teachers would be able to do this with the resources provided by the school and despite whatever else was happening elsewhere in their lives.

However, we do not live in an ideal world. Teachers are human beings who sometimes find themselves working not at their best. If they are aware of this, they may only need a small amount of support to improve – but the problem is when teachers do not realise that they can do better and student learning is suffering. This is a sensitive issue that needs careful handling but is part of the role and responsibility of a good school leader.

In this booklet you will learn how to gather evidence about teacher performance and explore some ideas to improve it by using planning supportive development activities. Your teachers are the biggest determinant of student achievement and therefore your influence in promoting teacher performance will directly impact on student learning and outcomes. As a school leader you can enable teachers to have more impact by supporting them to raise their performance.

What you are going to learn in this booklet

The resources, activities, pauses for thought and case studies in this booklet will help you to:

- assess teacher performance.
- plan to improve the performance of individual teachers.
- consider ideas on how to conduct constructive meetings with teachers about performance.
- develop strategies to use to maintain the performance of teachers.

Your learning diary

During your work on this booklet, you will find it useful to make notes in your learning diary. If you have not already started one, this is a book or folder (either paper or electronic) where you can document thoughts, ideas and plans together in one place.

You may be working through this booklet alone but you will learn much more if you are able to discuss your learning with another school leader. This could be a colleague with whom you already collaborate, or someone with whom you form a new relationship. It could be through an organised activity or on a more informal basis. Notes you make in your Learning Diary will be useful for this, as well as for helping you to map your learning and development.

Becoming aware of areas for improvement

Your teachers will have obvious strengths but they will also have areas where they could improve. It is important to recognise and acknowledge the good performance of teachers – later in this booklet you will do an activity to specifically address this. First, however, the focus is on tackling under-performance. This is where teachers are not employing the full range of behaviours, skills and knowledge associated with being an excellent teacher. To help you start thinking about this, read the case study below and complete the activity that follows it.

Case Study 1: Mr Ishola's class's exam results

The results of the first set of class tests of all subjects had come in. The school leader, Mr Okeke, sat with Mrs Sani, the most meticulous teacher to whom he had assigned responsibility for analysing exam and test results.

'As usual,' said Mrs Sani rather dramatically, 'the students have performed really badly in science. I am sure this batch is going to bring down the results of the school!'

Mr Okeke was puzzled. He had taught these students in the previous year and had found they responded very well to challenge. The results did not match his memory of their capability.

'Is it all the science subjects?' he asked.

Mrs Sani studied his analysis in silence and then, looking up with a wry smile, said: 'You're a genius – it's just biology. That's Mr Ishola's subject. I don't think they like him too much. For one, he draws the most intricate diagrams with a beautifully steady hand and expects the students to copy it exactly in the same way. And of course, he still uses a foot-long scale to point at the labels!'

Mr Okeke nodded without responding. He certainly was not going to get pulled into discussing other teachers in the school.

'Thank you, Mrs Sani. Now let's look at their results in the social sciences,' was all he said.

In this case Mr Okeke was able to make links between poor results and teacher performance by analysing test results. There would not always be such direct links and it is important to look at other possible factors (e.g. illness, lack of access to textbooks, poor attendance patterns).

Activity 1: Recognising issues related to teacher's performance

This activity will help you to start drawing up a list of indicators of a teacher's underperformance in your school.

Mr Okeke used student results to help him to identify a teacher's under-performance. Think about the ways that you might become aware of a teacher's under-performance in your school. Write down three or four ideas in your Learning Diary.

Discussion

Every situation is unique, but here are some indicators that might suggest teacher performance issues:

- *student absence is higher in one class*
- *students are frequently unruly in one class*
- *parents are unhappy about their child's progress in one class*
- *students in a particular class do not appear to be progressing as well as expected*
- *teachers in the class above complain about the low level of attainment of one class*
- *students appear to be progressing less well in some subjects than in others.*

Gathering evidence of performance

The important thing to bear in mind is that poor teacher performance is not necessarily related to whether a teacher approaches their teaching or organises their classroom in a different way from others. It is more that their teaching does not result in the progress normally expected of all their students at that time. It might be that the able students or the students from a particular cultural background do well but others do not, for example.

If you are not regularly gathering data on student learning by visiting classrooms or talking with teachers, you may not be aware of this under-performance until the students' education is severely impaired. For this reason, regular monitoring is necessary and should be a routine part of your work. Through monitoring you will also recognise good performance and recognise the teachers who are performing well.

How might you gather evidence of performance? It is very important that action is taken based on evidence rather than anecdotes or guesses. It is however common for students, parents and, of course, teachers themselves, to compare teachers, their practices, their results, their effectiveness, and sometimes this leads to tensions and difficulties, or even disorder. It is therefore often necessary to have objective elements on a given teacher or a specific class.

Evidence-gathering needs to be deliberate and the process is ideally unbiased and balanced to ensure the soundness and reliability of the findings. Once you gather some initial data, you should seek out further information to clarify what exactly is going on. This might involve:

- gathering progress data from several classes
- sitting at the back of classrooms, observing teaching and learning
- talking to the students about their experiences. However, in this case, great care must be taken not to cast any doubt on the teacher's ability by your questions and responses to the students' answers.

It is also important to remember that you will not be judging the person but that you are seeking to identify one or two aspect(s) of the teacher's attitude, skills or knowledge that are preventing pupils from learning as efficiently as desirable. When looking at teacher competency, it is important to look at individual teachers' professional behaviour, not them as a person. This is explored in Activity 2.

Activity 2: What are you judging?

This activity will enable you to start differentiating between what relates to professional behaviour and what relates to the person.

Look at the list below and make a note in your Learning Diary about whether you think each item of evidence is about behaviour or the person:

1. Observing a classroom for 20 minutes, noting down the number of different students that the teacher talks to.
2. Comments from the students about the way that the teacher dresses.
3. A report from a teacher that the teacher in the next-door class always arrives ten minutes late for their lesson.

4. Observing a classroom for 20 minutes, noting down how many open questions the teacher asks.
5. Comments from the students about how they sometimes have different work from each other.
6. Comments from parents that the teacher is from a different region.

Discussion

Some of these are not as clear-cut as they first appear.

- *Options 1, 4 and 5 are clearly about the way the teacher behaves*
- *Option 2 is inappropriate and is clearly against the person, unless the dress is unmistakably unsuitable. Comments like this should be discouraged.*
- *Option 3 is similar, but you would need to be aware of potential bias and gather further evidence before acting.*
- *Option 6 could be blatant intolerance, but it could be that the teacher's accent is so strong that the students find it difficult to understand. Again, there would need to be further investigation.*

If you were concerned about teaching in your school, think now about how you might gather evidence that would be useful to understand more about the issue and what might be causing it.

Activity 3: How you could gather evidence in your school

This activity will enable you to consider how you might collect data in your school.

If you can do this activity with members of your leadership team or a colleague from another school:

- Brainstorm examples of evidence you could collect and note them down.
- For each piece of evidence, discuss the issues it might raise.
- Note the important points in your learning diary.

If you are working alone:

- Make notes in your learning diary about the evidence you could gather and the issues you might have in gathering it.

Discussion

Clearly, we do not know the situation in your school nor what evidence you have decided upon. But the issues are likely to be similar to those below:

- *Teachers may be suspicious about your motives and unhappy about you entering their classroom.*
- *Students may act differently because of your presence.*
- *Parents may have concerns if students report your activity.*

As you gather evidence in your school on a more regular basis, it will cause less excitement and concern, but initially, you will need to be reassuring. Gathering evidence from more than one teacher or class reduces the focus of attention for others to some extent. You can also think about involving the teachers by asking them what they would like feedback on as a way of making the process more collaborative. This should also allow the teachers to become more analytical about their own practice and encourage to think on the strategies they could use to improve.

It is particularly useful to share your concerns with other school leaders to see if they have any useful solutions to the potential problems or different forms of evidence.

Difficulties with gathering evidence

Now read the two case studies below, and complete their associated activities. They demonstrate how difficult it can be to gather evidence of poor performance.

Case Study 2: Mr Musa's review of students' books

School leader Mr Musa shared his difficulties in gathering evidence about the school's teaching and learning practices with Mrs Nansel, his deputy who had just returned from sick leave. He reminded her that a day before she had reported sick, he had asked all the teachers to gather a sample of their students' classwork and homework books. 'It took two weeks of persistent requests before I could get them from everyone,' he complained. 'It would have been so much easier if I had just asked you to organise it. I think they do what you say more easily.'

Amused, Mrs Nansel asked him what he needed the books for. Mr Musa said that he had been through the books and recorded whether the work had been checked and the sort of comments that students had received as feedback. Mrs Nansel asked if he had shared the reason he needed the books with the teachers. Mr Musa confirmed he had.

'Well, then,' said Mrs Nansel. 'It's possible that they are worried about how you will use the information that you have gathered.'

Mr Musa said he was aware of that, but didn't want to take the books under false pretences. Mrs Nansel agreed with him that it would not be right to do that, but suggested that he could have started with a few of the more confident teachers. As word spread that the school leader's discussions had been very useful and interesting, more teachers would have gathered the courage to bring their books to him. Mr Musa nodded and said he saw the point: when introducing a new way of working, it would be better to begin with some teachers rather than wait for all of them.

'Maybe I should take this advice now that I want to confirm what I found in the books by observing classes. I can start maybe by observing Mrs Ebuka's class. She was the first one to give me the books of her students.'

Mrs Nansel agreed that Mrs Ebuka would be happy to have Mr Musa in her class if she knew why he was coming in.

'Maybe,' she said thoughtfully, 'it would be even better if you shared your students' books with her and asked her to come observe you when you are teaching too!'

Mr Musa laughed and said Mrs Ebuka would love that – and so would the other teachers! 'You have some interesting ways of approaching difficulties,' he complimented Mrs Nansel.

As you read Case Study 2, you may have started to realise that it is not so much about the evidence you gather as the way you go about gathering it and the way you inform people and how vulnerable you make them feel.

It is worth giving some thought to how you go about gathering evidence. You may want to think, for example, about how long you spend on your classroom observations – ten minutes is generally sufficient time to observe without being too disruptive to the teacher's lesson.

Activity 4: Modifying how you gather evidence

This activity invites you to reflect on your plans or approaches to collecting data on the quality of teaching and learning in your school and, if necessary, to modify them?

In your logbook, start compiling a list of do's and don'ts when you start to gather information in your school. You can of course borrow ideas from Mrs Nansel and Mr Musa in the case study!

Do	Avoid
<i>Explain how the information gathered will be used</i>	<i>Not sharing objectives and expected results</i>

Case study 3: Mrs Nsisong analyses mathematics test scores

School leader Mrs Nsisong studied the test results for the mid-term examinations. She had heard about the staff room discussions about the performance of the students in mathematics. Mr Bola, a mathematics teacher, had disparagingly declared that very few girls in JSS Class 3 understood mathematics and warned that trying to get the rest to pass the final examinations was going to be really difficult.

Mrs Nsisong could see why he was worried – the scores on the test of more than half the students were between 5 and 45 out of a 100. She then looked at the performance of the other classes in mathematics. Class IX had not done very well, but Classes X and XII had done better. She wondered if it was evidence that all of them were going to private tuition in preparation for the public examination at the end of the year; she would have to find out from the students.

Some patterns started becoming evident to her. For instance, the top scorers in each of the classes were clearly very good. Their scores clustered between 90 and 100 out of a 100. Then there was a visible gap in scores between 80 and 90. Almost a fifth of the class had scored between 60 and 80, and then another fifth between 40 and 60.

She picked up her green highlighter and began to identify the students doing well. She used red for the students who had scored less than 35 out of 100. She was going to have an important conversation with a mathematics teacher and she was sure she would need very strong numerical data. Along with the numbers, she also profiled the weaker students who were in the last category. Then, with the assistance of the teachers, she would identify the areas where students were weak, as well as those where they were strong. This background work would help her structure the in-class support and the after-school programme for the weaker students. She had seen the difference that this approach had made for the science papers; results in physics had already benefited from focused support in specific areas.

Activity 5: Gathering at least two types of evidence from more than one class

This activity gives you the opportunity to try out and put into practice some of the ideas you have picked up while working through the beginning of this booklet. It will help you to start tracking the effectiveness of teachers in your school.

Drawing on some of the examples in Case Studies [2](#) and [3](#), and the notes you took during Activity 4, gather at least two types of evidence on student learning from more than one class. Make sure you keep a copy of this evidence.

Make notes in your learning diary about

- how you proceeded: organisation and communications
- the teachers' reactions
- the way you analysed the results
- any unexpected patterns you notice.

As you make your notes, consider if you found the process easier or harder than you expected, and whether there were any issues you had not anticipated. Record your thoughts – these will be useful points to discuss with your colleagues if you have the opportunity.

Discussion

Again, we do not know what evidence you have collected or what unexpected patterns you have noted. However, it is important to remember that this is likely to be only part of an entire process of investigation. It is often the case that informal observations do not provide the whole picture – and even with two pieces of evidence, the picture is only partial.

Giving feedback

Gathering data can be a sensitive issue with your teachers; giving constructive feedback can be equally delicate. Although you may see a greater priority in giving feedback to an underperforming teacher, it is just as important to give positive feedback to the teachers who are doing well, so that they can know what you value in their working practices. This is vitally important in motivating your teachers and encouraging them to strive further. To be valuable to the teacher, your positive feedback should be specific and based on your observations, For example:

Your instructions to the students are very clear and then I noticed that you follow up with further advice while they are working in groups.

I've noticed that you have new displays up in the classroom. I really think it encourages the students to feel pride in their work.

I heard two students talking about your maths lesson in the corridor – they were grappling with a problem you had set and I could see that you had really inspired them.'

The test results for the girls in your class have risen by 25 per cent this year – congratulations !

You may have more difficulty with giving less positive feedback, but when you base your feedback on evidence, this can help a great deal. Case Study 4 and Activity 6 look at the evidence-gathering process and how to offer feedback to an underperforming teacher. Both will help you to consider how to prepare for giving appropriate feedback.

Case Study 4: School leader Mrs Chukwu gathers evidence on a teacher

One Thursday the school leader, Mrs Chukwu, was on her daily walk around the school. The previous Monday she had decided that during that week, she would gather evidence on the beginnings of classes. Two minutes before the bell rang for a change of lesson, she would take up her position at the far end of the corridor from which she could see all the activity in both corridors of classrooms. As the bell rang, she would watch teachers and students walk out of the classrooms they had been in and enter the classrooms where their new lesson was about to begin.

Today, Mrs Chukwu was on the lookout for one person who she had noticed every day as the person who took a long time to get to class and then a long time to move out of it. It was Mr Danjuma, the history teacher. And like the other days, she watched as a teacher waited impatiently outside the classroom for five minutes until Mr Danjuma emerged. Mrs Chukwu watched Mr Danjuma amble down the corridor. One of the classes he passed was the one he actually needed to go into, but he didn't. He walked past it, straight to the staff room.

Five minutes later, Mr Danjuma strolled out of the staff room in the direction of the class, which by now was so noisy that the neighbouring classes shut their doors to keep out the sound – despite this cutting off their ventilation.

Mrs Chukwu followed Mr Danjuma into class. She walked, as she usually did, to the back of the classroom, and the students made a place for her immediately. She glanced at students' books on the table in front of her – they were busy finishing the science homework for the next lesson. Mr Danjuma began the class with an instruction that their history homework should be submitted immediately. He then asked the students who had not submitted their homework to stand. Around half the class stood up. Mrs Chukwu looked at her watch – it was 20 minutes into the lesson. Mr Danjuma's sermon to the students on the importance of homework was longer than usual. Mrs Chukwu looked at the other students in class who had submitted their homework. She could see them getting restless and impatient. She quietly walked out of the class and made her way back to her room to prepare herself for a difficult conversation.

Resource 1 *Monitoring and giving feedback* may prove useful to you. It has obvious parallels with this approach with your teachers.

Activity 6: Giving feedback to an underperforming teacher

This activity will invite you to reflect on how to conduct an interview with an ineffective teacher. It will also enable you to start to build up a feedback toolbox.

Think about how you would approach giving feedback to Mr Danjuma. Make some notes on:

- how you would start the conversation
- the main points you want to raise.

Remember, it is a good idea to consider structuring your feedback that so you start with a positive and then end with a plan to improve matters. When the teacher leaves your office with a positive and accessible first objective on which to focus, it is easier to agree on a follow-up meeting.

Discussion

There may be background to this observation that we are not told about in Case Study 4, such as previous high performance or a recent family bereavement; something that Mrs Chukwu knows and would take account of in her feedback. We cannot plan now for any of those eventualities, but a very gentle opening is probably always advisable. Perhaps starting with 'Tell me about the opening of the lesson that I observed the other day, ' or something similar, so that it is an opening for the teacher to explain why it was atypical or what was different about that day.

After the initial opening, the meeting might move to examining the observation in a little more detail, particularly if the teacher does not appear concerned about the opening of the lesson. The crucial point is the loss of learning time for these students. The lesson started late, it took time to settle and then there was the lecture about the homework, all taking valuable learning time. This might be an appropriate single focus for the feedback to the teacher: how to maximise learning time and the need to change the observed behaviour to allow this to happen.

You should note that there is no reason why you should not take time to plan your feedback when you talk with your own teachers. Feedback is a skill that develops over time and with practice, so making a few notes beforehand can really help you be specific.

Muralidharan and Sundararaman (2010) report on research where they found that it was not sufficient to simply provide feedback to teachers on their performance, even where this showed that their classes were not performing as well as other classes. The teachers changed their teaching behaviours in later classroom observation sessions, but no improvement was noted in student outcomes. They conclude that the teachers need much higher input, motivation or inducement to change their behaviour permanently.

One way to provide this higher input that has been shown to improve outcomes for students is to provide coaching to your teachers. You can learn more about coaching in the TESSA Share – Apréli@ booklet [Accompanying teachers: coaching and mentoring](#).

You can also work with a teacher to develop a plan about how to develop new attitudes, skills or knowledge.

Activity 7: Formulating an action plan

This activity leads you to consider how to support and monitor an action plan for a teacher-colleague.

Thinking of the research of Muralidharan and Sundararaman (2010) mentioned above, imagine you are Mrs Chukwu from [Case Study 4](#).

- Prepare a plan of actions on ways that you might work with Mr Danjuma to enable him to overcome his low performance in the classroom.
- Think about how this plan of actions will help the teacher in his development and how it can be monitored sensitively by you and by Mr Danjuma himself.

These case study activities are for you to practise skills that you can transfer to your own teachers and school setting.

Discussion

- This could be a chance to be creative. If Mr Danjuma had a physical reason to return to the staff room between lessons, why not have a monitor who gave out worksheets or books at the start of the lesson, and have the students start before he joined them?
- Is it possible to set up some team teaching so that there is another teacher to provide good starts to the lesson? Would Mr Danjuma benefit from some coaching or mentoring?
- The plan would have to include follow-up observations, clear objectives/targets and regular meetings with someone to discuss the progress.

In the next activity you are going to provide feedback to a teacher who is doing well. This might be a teacher about whom you earlier gathered evidence or it might be a new observation. Make sure that you use evidence in this activity and not assumptions based on the teacher's good reputation.

Activity 8: Feedback for a teacher who is performing well

In this activity, you are going to prepare feedback for a successful teacher, give this feedback and reflect on how you felt and what you learnt during the session with the teacher.

Consider a teacher that you have observed teaching an excellent lesson.

Select a specific section of the lesson or a particular aspect of this teacher's work that you thought was particularly good. Think carefully about the feedback that you want to give and reassure yourself that you have appropriate evidence to support that feedback.

In your feedback you need to:

- describe the activity or one specific aspect of the activity
- explain why you judged the activity to be high in quality
- offer praise supported by evidence
- choose and use relevant criteria upon which to base your discussion.

Plan what you are going to say and plan the environment for the meeting. During the course of the meeting, you could go on to ask the teacher to reflect on:

- the reasons why you did select this activity or specific aspect in the activity and invite them to become more reflective
- on how they might extend their good practice to others, or to other areas of their teaching.

After the meeting, make notes in your Learning Diary on:

- how you think the feedback was received by the teacher. What behaviours did you observe to help you reach that conclusion?
- how you felt during and after the meeting.

If you have colleagues you can trust, discuss this with them.

Discussion

Hopefully the meeting went well and your praise was well received. If this was the first such meeting you have arranged with a teacher in your school, both you and the teacher are likely to have been nervous. Conversations about performance are difficult even when they are positive. The criteria used are very important to keep the conversation on an objective, professional level. It is important that the feedback is on their performance, not on them as a person.

Evidence-gathering, feedback and teacher development as on-going practice

Having worked through this unit, you will know that setting up the evidence-gathering, feedback and additional support for one teacher when poor performance has been noted is a very time-intensive and emotionally draining exercise.

Evidence-gathering, feedback and teacher development works best when it is part of on-going practice. This reduces the chance of underperformance going unnoticed and can drive up the level of performance overall. It does not have to be the school leader who does all the evidence-gathering and feedback; it can be shared among the teachers as part of their development too.

Activity 9: Regular reviews of teaching

In this activity you are going to draw up a plan that will enable you to review regularly an aspect of current practice in your school.

1. Choose one aspect of your school's practice that, through your observations, you have identified as needing improvement. This could, for example, be the start of lessons, the organisation of homework or relations between pupils and teachers, or any other aspect you consider appropriate.

There are many issues you could choose to focus on. You could use the key resources developed by TESSA to help you to identify aspects of teaching that you want to review. You could, for example, use [Resource 2 Planning lessons](#), as a hand-out for teachers or it may help you to decide what to look out for.

2. Make notes in your learning diary about why you chose that aspect of the teaching.
3. You could perhaps also make a note of other aspects you might like to look at in the future and why.

Now read the case study 5 below.

Case Study 5: Mrs Abiola tracks her teachers' progress

Mrs Abiola meticulously maintained her school leader's diary. She found it invaluable to look back over the year, mulling over the monthly targets she had set herself.

This month she had determined to look at the endings of classes. Her goals were to ensure that:

- teachers finish the lesson by summarising the content and outcomes
- the homework set at the end of the lesson is accessible and achievable by all students
- classes end on time.

These goals had been circulated to the teachers on an internal memo and it was made clear that this action was to improve the learning of all students. After all of the teachers' signatures had been collected, it had been photocopied and pinned on the noticeboard in the staff room.

Mrs Abiola had created a tracker to fill in during the week: a table that had five columns and four rows. The first column's heading was 'Subject' and under that were listed 'Science', 'Social sciences', 'Mathematics' and 'English'. The remaining column headings referred to classes: 'G5a', 'G5b', 'G6a' and 'G6b'.

The table had begun to fill up. She had walked into the Class G5b science lesson in the last ten minutes and completed her observation form, focusing only on her goals for the month. She had done the same for Classes G6a in English, G5a in mathematics and G6b in social sciences. This week, she planned to complete the observation of the remaining 20 classes and then put up the data in the staff room, in advance of the teachers' meeting. She had planned the data so that it would be presented as a pie chart, without any names. However, she did have a plan on meeting the teachers who were unable to meet the goals, to ask them how she could support them to achieve the targets.

One of them had already come in to discuss the lesson plan with her – and they had worked together to improve the way the lesson could be conducted. The G6a English lesson by Mrs Igbinedion had been planned really well and the lesson summary had been clear, with students identifying their learning. Mrs Igbinedion had been delighted with the feedback, but it had taken a bit of encouragement before she had agreed to be a role model for other colleagues. Mrs Abiola gave herself a little star on the corner of the day's page – her plan was working. She was determined that by the end of the month, all three goals would be met.

It was then that she realised she hadn't thought of how she would celebrate the achievement with her staff! Her plan was incomplete. She made the final diary entry for the day: 'My homework: think about how to get feedback from the students on the usefulness of the lesson summary, and how the feedback can be collated and reported to the teachers.'

Activity 10: Reviewing your plan

This activity enables you to refine your work on the Regular Practice Review plan begun in [Activity 9](#) and to consider its implementation.

Having read [Case Study 5](#), have another look at your own plan and:

- Consider how you might want to change it.
- Discuss your idea with two of your teachers and see if you wish to change it further before implementing it.
- Make notes in your Learning Diary about their response to the suggested activity and as a result think about how you might introduce it to your whole staff.

Summary

Students have the right to expect excellent teaching, but do not always receive it. There can be a range of reasons for this, and one of those – teacher performance – is within the remit and ability of a school leader to influence.

However, this will only happen in an organisation where levels of trust are high. Individuals must feel valued and know that it is their teaching behaviour, rather than them personally, that is being judged – otherwise it will lead to bad feeling and antagonism. This is why it is important to get practice at providing positive feedback before the more difficult areas are tackled.

The more regularly a teacher's classroom behaviour is reflected upon, drawing on objective evidence, the less likely it is that their performance will drop to a level described as poor – particularly where supportive development activities are planned. To establish a culture in the school where observation and performance discussion are the norm may take a long time, over a year, perhaps. So although it may be hard at the beginning and you may meet some resistance, persevere, but with sensitivity and fairness.

Resources

Resource 1: Monitoring and giving feedback

Improving students' performance involves constantly monitoring and responding to them, so that they know what is expected of them and they get feedback after completing tasks. They can improve their performance through your constructive feedback.

Monitoring

Effective teachers monitor their students most of the time. Generally, most teachers monitor their students' work by listening and observing what they do in class. Monitoring students' progress is critical because it helps them to:

- achieve higher grades
- be more aware of their performance and more responsible for their learning
- improve their learning
- predict achievement on state and local standardised tests.

It will also help you as a teacher to decide:

- when to ask a question or give a prompt
- when to praise
- whether to challenge
- how to include different groups of students in a task
- what to do about mistakes.

Students improve most when they are given clear and prompt feedback on their progress. Using monitoring will enable you to give regular feedback, letting your students know how they are doing and what else they need to do to advance their learning.

One of the challenges you will face is helping students to set their own learning targets, also known as self-monitoring. Students, especially struggling ones, are not used to having ownership of their own learning. But you can help any student to set their own targets or goals for a project, plan out their work and set deadlines, and self- monitor their progress. Practising the process and mastering the skill of self-monitoring will serve them well in school and throughout their lives.

Listening to and observing students

Most of the time, listening to and observing students is done naturally by teachers; it is a simple monitoring tool. For example, you may:

- listen to your students reading aloud
- listen to discussions in pair or groupwork
- observe students using resources outdoors or in the classroom
- observe the body language of groups as they work.

Make sure that the observations you collect are true evidence of student learning or progress. Only document what you can see, hear, justify or count.

As students work, move around the classroom in order to make brief observation notes. You can use a class list to record which students need more help, and also to note any emerging misunderstandings. You can use these observations and notes to give feedback to the whole class or prompt and encourage groups or individuals.

Giving feedback

Feedback is information that you give to a student about how they have performed in relation to a stated goal or expected outcome. Effective feedback provides the student with:

- information about what happened
- an evaluation of how well the action or task was performed
- guidance as to how their performance can be improved.

When you give feedback to each student, it should help them to know:

- what they can actually do
- what they cannot do yet
- how their work compares with that of others
- how they can improve.

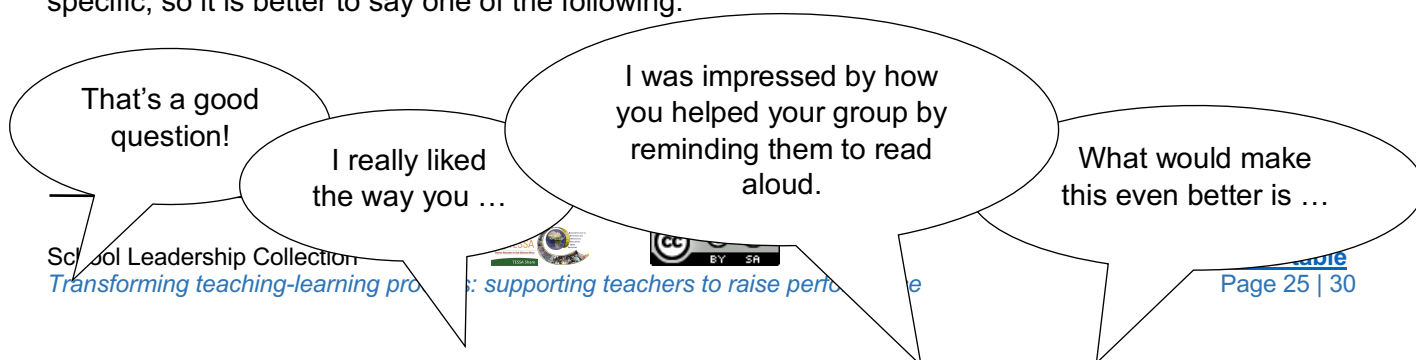
It is important to remember that effective feedback helps students. You do not want to inhibit learning because your feedback is unclear or unfair. Effective feedback is:

- **focused** on the task being undertaken and the learning that the student needs to do
- **clear and honest**, telling the student what is good about their learning as well as what requires improvement
- **actionable**, telling the student to do something that they are able to do
- given in **appropriate language** that the student can understand
- given at the **right time** – if it's given too soon, the student will think 'I was just going to do that!'; too late, and the student's focus will have moved elsewhere and they will not want to go back and do what is asked.

Whether feedback is spoken or written in the students' workbooks, it becomes more effective if it follows the guidelines given below.

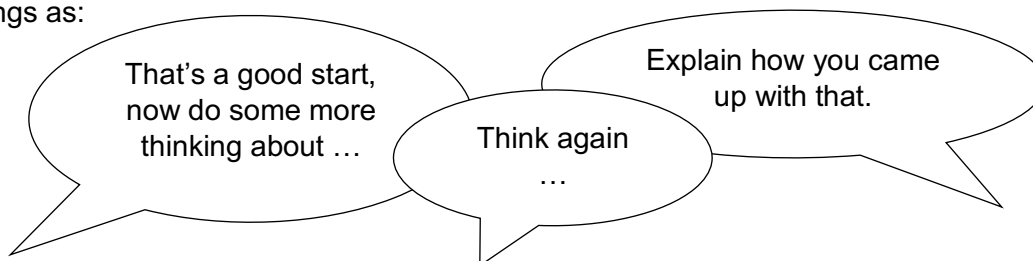
Using praise and positive language

When we are praised and encouraged, we generally feel a great deal better than when we are criticised or corrected. Reinforcement and positive language is motivating for the whole class and for individuals of all ages. Remember that praise must be specific and targeted on the work done rather than about the student themselves, otherwise it will not help the student progress. 'Well done' is non-specific, so it is better to say one of the following:

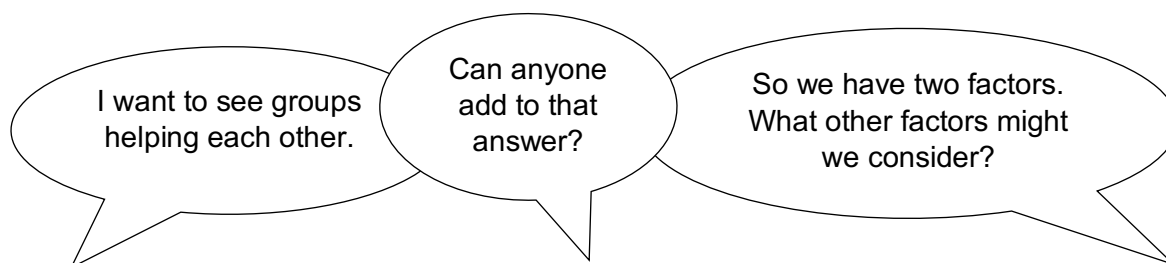


Using prompting as well as correction

The dialogue that you have with your students helps their learning. If you tell them that an answer is incorrect and finish the dialogue there, you miss the opportunity to help them to keep thinking and trying for themselves. If you give students a hint or ask them a further question, you prompt them to think more deeply and encourage them to find answers and take responsibility for their own learning. For example, you can encourage a better answer or prompt a different angle on a problem by saying such things as:



It may be appropriate to encourage other students to help each other. You can do this by opening your questions to the rest of the class with such comments as:



Correcting students with a 'yes' or 'no' might be appropriate to tasks such as spelling or number practice, but even here you can prompt students to look for emerging patterns in their answers, make connections with similar answers or open a discussion about why a certain answer is incorrect.

Self-correction and peer correction is effective and you can encourage this by asking students to check their own and each other's work while doing tasks or assignments in pairs. It is best to focus on one aspect to correct at a time so that there is not too much confusing information

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Resource 2: Planning and preparing your lessons

Why planning and preparing is important

Good lessons have to be planned. Planning helps to make your lessons clear and well-timed, meaning that students can be active and interested. Effective planning also includes some in-built flexibility so that teachers can respond to what they find out about their students' learning as they teach. Working on a plan for a series of lessons involves knowing the students and their prior learning, what it means to progress through the curriculum, and finding the best resources and activities to help students learn.

Planning is a continual process to help you prepare both individual lessons as well as series of lessons, each one building on the last. The stages of lesson planning are:

- being clear about what your students need in order to make progress
- deciding how you are going to teach in a way that students will understand and how to maintain flexibility to respond to what you find
- looking back on how well the lesson went and what your students have learnt in order to plan for the future.

Planning a series of lessons

When you are following a curriculum, the first part of planning is working out how best to break up subjects and topics in the curriculum into sections or chunks. You need to consider the time available as well as ways for students to make progress and build up skills and knowledge gradually. Your experience or discussions with colleagues may tell you that one topic will take up four lessons, but another topic will only take two. You may be aware that you will want to return to that learning in different ways and at different times in future lessons, when other topics are covered or the subject is extended.

In all lesson plans you will need to be clear about:

- what you want the students to learn
- how you will introduce that learning
- what students will have to do and why.

You will want to make learning active and interesting so that students feel comfortable and curious. Consider what the students will be asked to do across the series of lessons so that you build in variety and interest, but also flexibility. Plan how you can check your students' understanding as they progress through the series of lessons. Be prepared to be flexible if some areas take longer or are grasped quickly.

Preparing individual lessons

After you have planned the series of lessons, each individual lesson will have to be planned **based on the progress that students have made up to that point**. You know what the students should have learnt or should be able to do at the end of the series of lessons, but you may have needed to re-cap something unexpected or move on more quickly. Therefore each individual lesson must be planned so that all your students make progress and feel successful and included.

Within the lesson plan you should make sure that there is enough time for each of the activities and that any resources are ready, such as those for practical work or active groupwork. As part of planning materials for large classes you may need to plan different questions and activities for different groups.

When you are teaching new topics, you may need to make time to practise and talk through the ideas with other teachers so that you are confident.

Think of preparing your lessons in three parts. These parts are discussed below.

1 The introduction

At the start of a lesson, explain to the students what they will learn and do, so that everyone knows what is expected of them. Get the students interested in what they are about to learn by allowing them to share what they know already.

2 The main part of the lesson

Outline the content based on what students already know. You may decide to use local resources, new information or active methods including groupwork or problem solving. Identify the resources to use and the way that you will make use of your classroom space. Using a variety of activities, resources, and timings is an important part of lesson planning. If you use various methods and activities, you will reach more students, because they will learn in different ways.

3 The end of the lesson to check on learning

Always allow time (either during or at the end of the lesson) to find out how much progress has been made. Checking does not always mean a test. Usually it will be quick and on the spot – such as planned questions or observing students presenting what they have learnt – but you must plan to be flexible and to make changes according to what you find out from the students' responses.

A good way to end the lesson can be to return to the goals at the start and allowing time for the students to tell each other and you about their progress with that learning. Listening to the students will make sure you know what to plan for the next lesson.

Reviewing lessons

Look back over each lesson and keep a record of what you did, what your students learnt, what resources were used and how well it went so that you can make improvements or adjustments to your plans for subsequent lessons. For example, you may decide to:

- change or vary the activities
- prepare a range of open and closed questions
- have a follow-up session with students who need extra support.

Think about what you could have planned or done even better to help students learn.

Your lesson plans will inevitably change as you go through each lesson, because you cannot predict everything that will happen. Good planning will mean that you know what learning you want to happen and therefore you will be ready to respond flexibly to what you find out about your students' actual learning.

Source: Planning lessons, TESS-India Key resources, p. 2, on line

<https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/resource/view.php?id=56432> (accessed 3 March 2024)

[Back to Activity 9](#)

References/bibliography

References are presented in two different ways. We invite you to choose the one that best suits your reading style.

References are classified in the order of appearance in the booklet.

The bibliography is classified according to the alphabetical order by authors' last names.

Many of the references below are attributed to two sources:

- Apréli@: Agir pour la mise en pratique des ressources éducatives libres @fricaine (or : Promoting the use of African open educational resources – formerly L'Association pour la Promotion des Ressources Éducatives Libres @fricaines or Association for the Promotion of African Open Education Resources)
- TESSA: Teacher Education in Sub Saharan Africa

So as not to lengthen the two lists, we will use the acronyms of these two sources, Apréli@ and TESSA.

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