

## Abstract

This study reports on an action research intervention to introduce two Assessment *for* Learning (AfL) teaching strategies, namely sharing the learning intention and the success criteria of the phonics lesson with a special class for children with mild general learning difficulties. AfL is defined as:

the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there (Assessment Reform Group, 2002b, p. 2).

The use of formative assessment methods as a pedagogical approach links the teaching and learning process in such a way that it has the potential to support the children's learning and to improve their achievement levels. International research has supported these findings. The research question of this study seeks to identify the challenges and difficulties the researcher encountered in introducing two of the five AfL strategies to the classroom. The potential of the strategies to enhance achievements would appear to be recorded over a longer period of time than that proposed in this research. The study also reports on the introduction of a Teacher Learning Community (TLC) to the classroom as a professional tool to support the implementation of the AfL strategies in the classroom.

The action research approach of the study is predominantly qualitative in design as it is dealing with data generated from action research in the real life setting of the special class. Observation, through the use of a DVD recorder, together with documentation from the TLC meetings and Lesson Reviews, children's lesson sheets and a researcher's log were the measures used for data collection.

The findings of the study are presented as a series of ten challenges that emerged in the implementation of the practice within the special classroom together with the unexpected findings. The timeliness of the study in the context of Irish educational assessment policy is outlined together with suggestions for possible recommendations for further research in the use of formative assessment in the Irish context.